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SECRET HITLER FILES



To the modern reader, Adolf Hitler's speeches seem long-winded, poorly written, and dull. But in person the Führer was an orator of genius, who could use that unpromising material to manipulate massed crowds of ordinary Germans.

HITLER THE ORATOR

Hitler contemplates his audience prior to starting a speech. The dictator had an almost mystical ability to pick up on the emotions of people en masse, but it would usually take him some time to get warmed up.



Adolf Hitler in action in front of a vast crowd of adoring Nazis and stormtroopers. Hitler's carefully learned oratorical tricks would have been lost on an SA man watching from the stands a quarter of a mile away, but most of the Führer's gestures and expressions were for the benefit of the press and film crews.

CAFÉ DRINKERS and hostel residents in the Vienna of 1910 would not have believed it. The scruffy young man with the strange ideas was the last person from whom anybody would have expected greatness. They could have had no idea that within a decade Adolf Hitler would be a rising political star, or that within a few years this youthful ranter would be able to hold mass audiences transfixed by his oratory. But that is exactly what happened, and before he committed suicide in Berlin in 1945 he would have addressed almost 35 million people in live audiences.

Hitler's public speaking was, in his rather grandiose words, "a tactic based on the precise calculation of all human weakness, the results of which must lead almost mathematically to success".

"A good speech" he explained "is like a flaming javelin which sets the crowd on fire."

His early technique may have been developed by the German Army. Before the Munich *Reichswehr* Group Headquarters sent Corporal Hitler to infiltrate the small DAP or German Worker's Party in 1919, he is believed to have received coaching in speaking skills.

TAUGHT BY THE ARMY

Certainly he had skills when he first spoke at DAP meetings, and listeners were impressed by his urgency and enthusiasm. But he was only reaching a tiny audience – his first speech on 16 October 1919 at the Hofbräukeller in Munich was to 111 people.

"I spoke for thirty minutes" he wrote afterwards "and what I had always felt deep down in my heart, without being able to put it to the test, proved true... I could make a good speech!"

In the early years of the NSDAP he concentrated on two themes, the Treaty of Versailles and the Jewish problem.

Hitler gained his first major audience outside Bavaria at the Munich Trial, the treason proceedings which started on 24 February 1924. The accused were the leaders of the failed 1923 Munich Beer Hall Putsch and included among the defendants General Erich Ludendorff. The trial attracted world-wide attention – there were over 100 reporters covering the event – and the powerful oratory of Adolf Hitler made its mark. Hitler argued that the guilty men were not those in the dock, but the judicial system that had put them on trial: the defendants were the true patriots.

During his subsequent imprisonment in Landsberg, the party fragmented. When he was released, Hitler's two-hour speech to his



Above: Hitler accepts a gift of flowers from members of the Bund Deutscher Mädel – the League of German Girls. Objectively, Hitler was hardly of prepossessing appearance, but large numbers of young German women treated the Führer as if he were a modern pop star.



Above: The Führer was careful to suppress any details of personal relationships with women. It would have been bad for his image as a man who had sacrificed all inner happiness in his devotion to the Volk, a pose which young women found particularly attractive.

Feminine Appeal

FOR HITLER the experience of inciting adulation in his mass audiences was a near-sexual experience. He had difficulty relating to individual people, but as historian Joachim Fest explained, the 'masses' – who in the Führer's mind were female – provided him "in the orgiastic collective delirium which he pushed to ever new heights, with a substitute for the emotional experience that had remained closed to him in all his monstrous ego-fixation".

Speaking to Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl Hitler revealed his own understanding of the sexual chemistry at work when he spoke. "Someone who does not understand the intrinsically feminine character of the masses will never be an effective speaker. Ask yourself, what does a woman expect from a man? Clearness, decision, power and action... Like a woman, the masses fluctuate between extremes... The Crowd is not only like a woman, but women constitute the most important element in an audience. The women usually lead, then follow the children and at last... follow the fathers".

The masses, like women, were to be obedient, passionate and wholly devoted. Hitler, it was said, dictated like a man but absorbed

Below: Peasant women greet the Führer as he drives past on a tour soon after achieving power. His appeal to women crossed all age barriers, young and old alike falling victim to the passion – a passion which often bordered on the hysterical.

his audience's moods like a woman.

Women were a key part of his success as a speaker. Herman Rauschning recalled that women were always seated in the front rows and "anyone looking down from the platform on those front-seat women and watching their expressions of rapturous self-surrender, their moist and glittering eyes, could not doubt the character of their enthusiasm".

Before fleeing Germany in the early 1930s, Otto Strasser attended a rally at which Hitler addressed a hall of 20,000 women. His speech culminated in the words: "What have I given you? What has National Socialism given you? We have given you Man." Strasser described the reaction to this pronouncement as "rapturous delirium, comparable only with an orgasm."

For women the Nazi Party represented a movement that offered them freedom from the drudgery of work or the claustrophobic world of the church and social round. The great rallies held the allure that a major pop festival might have today, climaxing with Hitler's speech as the headlining act.

Below: On major public occasions, many women in the crowd were afflicted by an hysterical Kontaktsucht, or desire for contact with the Führer. Mothers would offer their children as if for blessing – an offering which Hitler, who liked the young, would often accept.





Above: Stills from a Hitler speech demonstrate some of the wide range of expression the Führer used in his oratory. In full flow, the expansive gestures looked natural, but in fact most were calculated right down to the nth degree. Indeed, during the 1920s Hitler practiced many of his rhetorical tricks in front of a mirror. He even commissioned Heinrich Hoffmann to produce a set of photographs with which he analysed his delivery.

followers and rivals on 26 February 1925 was critical, since it went a long way towards healing divisions and reuniting the party – behind Adolf Hitler.

But Hitler was more than an inspired speaker. He and his associates left nothing to chance when it came to making an impact, and the Führer's speeches at the mass party rallies of the late 1920s and 1930s remain the defining moments of his rule.

PREPARED IN ADVANCE

The speeches were very carefully prepared and stage-managed. The size and composition of the crowd was planned, as was the time of day at which the Führer would speak. Hitler might arrive slightly later than the scheduled time, but this was often deliberate. The tension the delay produced was further heightened by the procession of banners, military music and the chanting shouts of "Sieg Heil!" Hitler asserted that some of his skills in crowd manipulation had been borrowed from the Catholic mass. Darkness and twilight allowed audiences to "succumb more easily to the dominating force of a stronger will".

Heinrich Hoffman, Hitler's photographer, recalled the power Hitler's personality could evoke even before speaking:

"We were in a hall, thousands of thousands of people, and something monstrous happened. There was a mass suggestion at work, a tension in the air, and everybody – men as well as women – abruptly began to tremble and weep and howl. And all the while Hitler sat there without saying a word, without stirring, just staring at them".

With the crowd now in an ecstatic state Hitler would mount to the spot-lit podium. His initial words sometimes sounded hesitant, as if he was groping for ideas. He began in a low, slow tenor voice, testing the reactions of the crowd. However, once he felt that he had hooked his audience, everything changed.

"After about fifteen minutes" one observer recalled, "something occurs that can only be described by an ancient, primitive metaphor: the spirit enters into him." Hitler himself confessed on one occasion that in front of a jubilant crowd he "became another person".

Hitler emphasised his words with "jerky energetic gestures of the right hand, sometimes clenching his fist". When angered Hitler's "voice could become hoarse, he would roll his r's and clench his fists, while his eyes blazed".

The hoarse voice would also be a feature of the closing phrases of Hitler's major public speeches, along with the carefully practised gestures by turn threatening or imploring.



Above: Hitler could be much more restrained when he needed to be. He knew that wild gestures and his characteristic hoarse, full-volume delivery would not go down well when addressing rich industrialists or senior political figures. On these occasions he spoke quietly and reasonably, although his commonplace Austrian accent must have grated on the ears of the more aesthetic and aristocratic members of such gatherings.

And always those calculated climaxes. They were designed to induce a collective rapture in the audience that has been called the "elimination of thought", "suggestive paralysis" and a "receptive state of fanatical devotion".

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Hitler asserted "the masses are like an animal that obeys instincts". He kept things simple, concentrating on short but memorable phrases, constant repetition, and the practice of attacking only one opponent at a time. The speeches rarely contained rational arguments. Indeed, their dogmatic tone was deliberately chosen to avoid giving "reasons" or to "refute other opinions".

Hitler knew what the crowd wanted to hear, and his speeches reflected back to his audience the ideas that angered or enthralled them – a kind of hysteria inducing positive feedback. In primitive punchy phrases he gave them plausible formulas of guilt as well



as lashing catch phrases of indignation and vague recipes of power. He offered them Fatherland, honour, greatness and revenge.

During the Nazi rise to power Hitler's audiences were mainly people in need, usually through no fault of their own. They included the unemployed, youths, pensioners, small shopkeepers, impoverished academics – an explosive mixture of the working and middle class who felt helpless, bitter and betrayed.

MASS DEVOTION

In a crowd responding to a powerful speaker, they felt that they had regained some dignity and power. "I feel you, and you feel me!" Hitler said, and they responded to the words. "It is faith in our nation that has made us, a small *Volk*, great; that has made us, a poor *Volk*, rich; that has made us, a vacillating, dispirited and anxious *Volk*, once again brave and courageous."

Though live audiences were the spur for Hitler's oratory, together with the near hypnotic charge crowd and the speaker gave each other, the Führer's speeches also worked on radio. In the comfort of their homes, families tuned in their *Volksempfänger* – People's Receivers – and heard the Führer's

words. Such was the power that Hitler's oratory exerted even over the radio, families would chant in unison with the voices coming over the air.

"Adolf Hitler is Germany and Germany is Adolf Hitler. He who pledges himself to Hitler pledges himself to Germany".

Hitler's SA Adjutant Wilhelm Brückner was under orders to keep visitors away when Hitler had finished a major speech. "Leave him in peace; the man's all in!" he told one outsider. Hitler admitted that after major speeches he was "soaking wet and had lost between two and three kilos in weight".

Only the thrill of a roaring crowd and the harsh amplification of his voice over the loudspeakers offered an escape from the damaged inner man. "Speaking was the element of his existence" recalled Nazi press chief Otto Dietrich. "When he was not speaking" observed another commentator, "he relapsed into his brooding twilight, his spirit temporarily departed, buried within himself and unable to reach a decision or to act – *post oratum triste*."



Above: Hitler addresses senior members of the party faithful at a 1940 celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the NSDAP. He was at his most natural in front of his old comrades, to the extent of cracking jokes.

The Führer contemplates the massed ranks of the SA at a rally in Dortmund. There have been other great orators in the 20th Century, but not even his hated rival Winston Churchill could match Hitler when it came to manipulating such huge crowds with words.





Warsaw capitulated to the Wehrmacht in September 1939. It was only a matter of days before the Nazis began rounding up Jews and concentrating them into a ghetto. Initially, they were enclosed by barbed wire, but this was eventually replaced by a wall (below).



JEWS IN WARSAW



As is usually the case when whole communities are victimised, the first to suffer were those who could least resist the harsh conditions: the elderly and the very young.

All of Poland suffered horribly under the Nazi jackboot, but no Polish community suffered more than the cosmopolitan and urbane Jews of Warsaw.

JEW S HAVE BEEN part of Warsaw's population for more than four centuries. By the start of the 20th Century, they made up about 30 percent of the city's one million population – the largest concentration of urban Jews in Europe, and second only to New York in the rest of the world.

Warsaw was the heart of the Polish Jewish community. Here were the largest concentrations of Jewish artists, lawyers, doctors, professors and rabbis.

The German invasion of September 1939 saw unspeakable brutalities committed against the Polish people. But if the Slavs of Eastern Europe were considered *untermensch*, the Jews were the hated race enemy. It is no coincidence that in the massive

aerial bombardment which laid waste to Warsaw, the old Jewish quarter of the city came in for particularly heavy attack, especially on 14 September. It was the eve of Yom Kippur, the day of fasting and repentance, and one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar.

Poland's army could not stand up to the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe. The city capitulated on 27 September. The next day, the occupying forces ordered a census of all Jews in the city.

Many of Warsaw's older Jews had spent time in Germany, and initially felt no real worries. After all, the Germans were cultured and civilised – surely nothing could be worse than the Tsarist pogroms of their youth.

It soon became clear that these Germans were far from civilised.



Above: Jews rounded up by the Gestapo and SD are lined up against the ghetto wall. Large numbers were shot out of hand when the ghetto was cleared, but most were to be sent to the death camp at Treblinka.

Below: The only Jews who were officially allowed out of the ghetto were the able-bodied men and women who were used as slave labour in the German-run factories and workshops producing war goods.



THE HOLOCAUST



Above: Jews move through the busy entrance to the Judenrat – oblivious to the dead body on the steps. Commonplace since the winter of 1939, such sights were hardly worth noticing.

Below: As the ghetto population fell, the Germans reduced the ghetto's size. As a result, bridges had to be built to let Jews get to their work places without having to leave the ghetto.



Stanislaw Sznapman, who wrote a memoir of the ghetto before his death in 1943, recalled: "the German army went crazy, soldiers rampaging through the Jewish quarter in nightly raids. They took money, jewellery and valuables at pistol point: anybody who dared to complain to the German authorities disappeared."

The Gestapo quickly placed the looting on a more orderly basis, systematically emptying Jewish apartments of valuables. Owners had to carry their possessions down to the waiting vehicles.

Orthodox Jews were targets of particular humiliation, being forced to submit to Nazi thugs whose idea of a great joke was to

pluck beards out by the roots. Jews had to bow and give way to Germans in the street – and anyone who failed to do so risked being beaten to a bloody pulp.

In November, the Nazis began to put their long-term plan into effect. The 300,000 Jews of Warsaw were moved into the confines of the old Jewish quarter in the centre of the city. Jews were now readily identifiable by the forced wearing of white armbands bearing a blue Star of David.

The winter was cold, the harsh conditions made worse by the influx of tens of thousands of rural Jews from the area around the city, who were being cleared off the land. On 1 January 1940, all synagogues and prayer houses closed, and two weeks later all males between the ages of 12 and 60 were ordered to register for forced labour.

WALLED UP

On 4 April, the Germans ordered that the ghetto, until then enclosed by fences, was to be walled up "for the protection of the Jews from Polish mobs". The men of the ghetto had to provide the bricks and do the job themselves. The Jews of Warsaw were being made to build and pay for their own prison.

The Germans established a Jewish council, the *Judenrat*, to govern the ghetto. Its primary tasks were to provide for the needs of the population, which by the middle of 1940 had grown to more than 400,000. It was headed by Adam Czerniakow, a 60-year-old engineer who had been active in the Jewish community before the war. He set up a 24-man council, which controlled several departments and a ghetto police force.

The members of the *Judenrat* were in an impossible situation. They were responsible for carrying out Nazi decrees and providing labour for the industries the Germans established in the ghetto. But they were also responsible for meeting the needs of their own people – with minimal resources

and no real authority.

The Germans looked on the ghetto as a source of cheap labour. Tens of thousands of men, women and children were forced to work in factories producing textiles, armaments and household goods. Pay was minimal, hours were long, work was hard, and many of their German overseers were sadists.

HUNGER AND SICKNESS

Conditions in the ghetto were appalling. The old Jewish quarter had been densely populated before the war, with around 150,000 inhabitants, and now it had to house three times as many. Food was in critically short supply, and insanitary conditions fostered the spread of disease.

In February 1940 the Germans introduced rationing. Germans in the city were allocated 2,600 calories per day; Poles were allowed 670 – and Jews were expected to survive on 184 calories per day. Of course they didn't: in 1940 it is estimated that over one in ten of the ghetto population – 50,000 people – starved to death or died from diseases caused by malnutrition.

Smuggling was rife. Some of the illicit trade was carried out by professionals, who made fortunes. More typical were the children, who forced their way through drains and holes in the walls in order to find food on the Polish parts of the city.

It was a risky business: any Jew caught outside the ghetto without authority was locked up in the Pawiak prison. Nearly 100,000 were jailed between 1940 and 1943, of whom 30,000 were executed. Most of the rest were sent to the death camps.

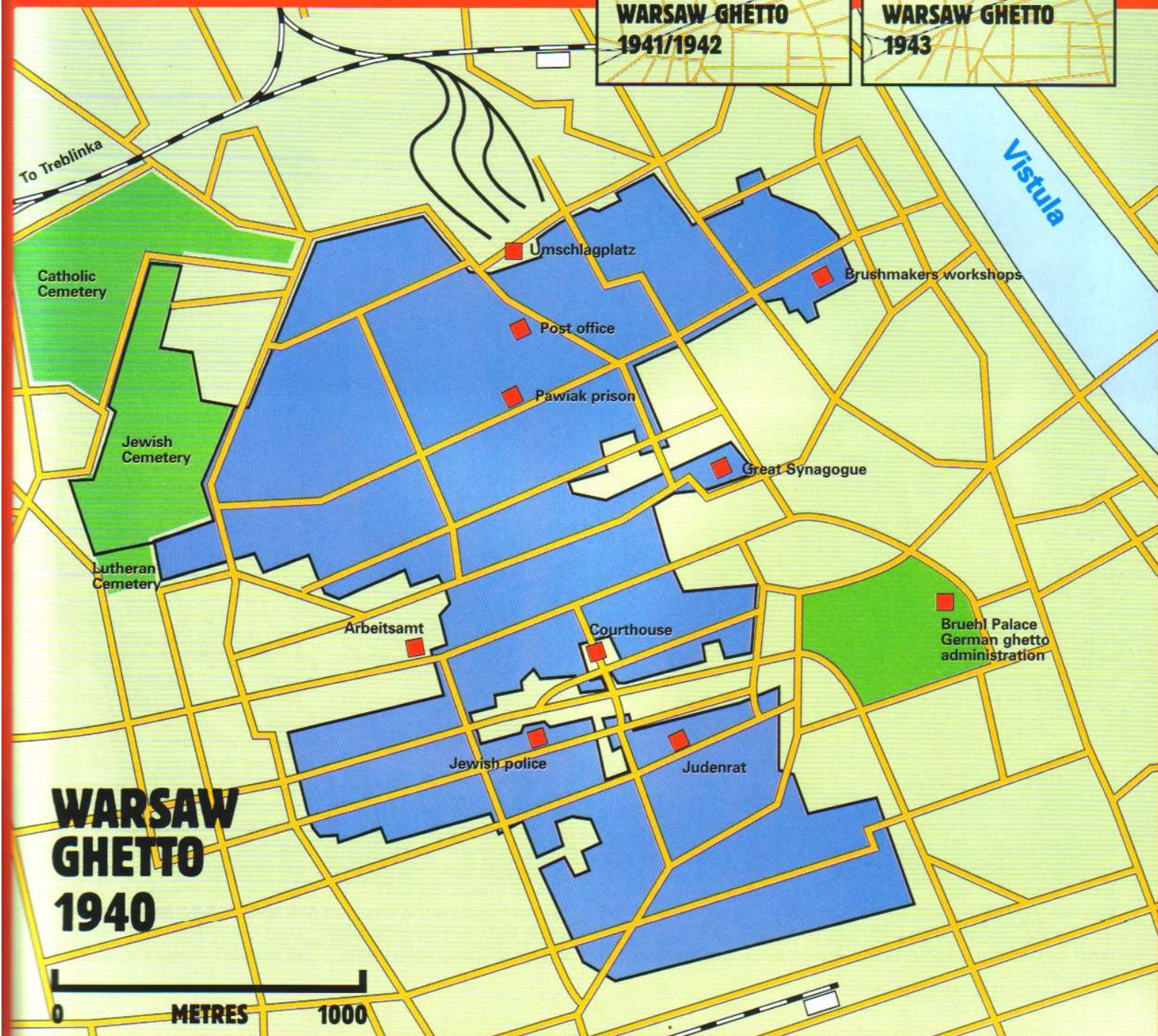
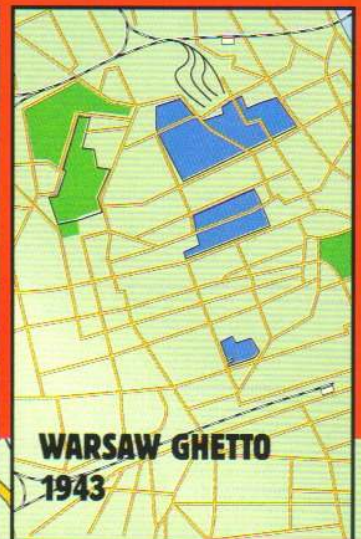
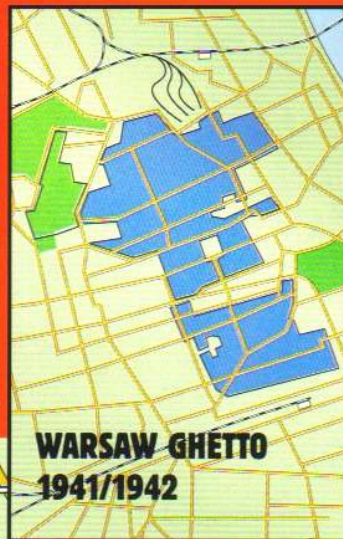
LIFE GOES ON

It was not all horror. Human beings will carry on under the most trying of conditions, and Warsaw was no exception. A clandestine underground movement published newspapers and political manifestos. Music, theatre and education continued under cover. Religion thrived: although Synagogues were

WARSAW

THE GHETTO

WARSAW'S GHETTO was located in the old Jewish quarter of the city, though before the war the Jewish community had spread far beyond its confines. Initially fenced in, it was later surrounded by a high wall topped with barbed wire. With more than 300,000 people housed in the ghetto area, a third of Warsaw's pre-war population was squeezed into less than three per cent of the city's area. The already appalling conditions were exacerbated still further in 1941 and early 1942, when the Germans deported the Jewish inhabitants of smaller ghettos in the countryside to the city. At its peak, the ghetto population topped 400,000, even though one in ten of the inhabitants died from starvation, cold or disease. The population dropped dramatically in 1942, when over 300,000 were deported to the death camp at Treblinka, where most were exterminated. As the population dropped, the Germans reduced the size of the ghetto, until by 1943 it comprised three or four small parts mostly centred on factories. At the time of the ghetto rising in April 1943 the population had dropped to some 50,000. Most were killed or deported after the revolt.





Above: The Jewish inhabitants of the ghetto began preparing for battle long before the first shots were fired, digging protective bunkers deep into the earth and knocking escape routes through the walls of buildings.

Left: The ZOB had some contact with Polish resistance groups, but they could provide little in the way of armaments. When they rose against the heavily-armed SS the Jews carried little more than a few pistols and grenades.

Right: Women fought alongside men. Their fate when captured was the same: most of the 700 or so fighters died in battle along with 5,000 other Jews, but the Germans also executed at least 7,000 people out of hand before deporting the rest of the people.



closed, services were held in secret and children were given instruction. And historians painstakingly recorded every aspect of ghetto life.

By the beginning of 1942, it was becoming clear that the German aim was to eliminate the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto. Starvation was not working, or to be more accurate was not working fast enough to satisfy Heinrich Himmler. In the summer of 1943 the *Reichsführer* ordered that the entire population of the ghetto be 'resettled'.

CLEARING THE GHETTO

On 22 July a major 'Aktion' began. People to be deported were selected by the *Judenrat*, and were rounded up by the ghetto police, who were themselves guarded by Latvian SS units and German police units under the command of SS

Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop. They had no help from Adam Czerniakow, who committed suicide rather than supervise the final destruction of his people.

The Germans and their helpers cleared the ghetto block by block, forcing the inhabitants to gather at the *Umschlagplatz* transit point, beating and kicking the reluctant into submission. From there they were loaded into cattle cars, ready to be taken on a short rail journey 100 kilometres to the southwest. Their final destination was the extermination camp at Treblinka.

Between 22 July and 3 October, over 310,000 Jews were 'resettled', according to the report written by Stroop. Nearly all were gassed.

Progress was still not fast enough for Himmler, who paid a surprise visit to Warsaw early in January 1944. Annoyed to

discover that there were still some 60,000 Jews in the ghetto, he ordered its complete clearance. Although around 6,000 were seized, many Jews simply hid out in the cellars and sewers of the ghetto. And for the first time there was resistance to the deportation: fighters from the *Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (ZOB or Jewish Fighting Organisation) ambushed the SS guards. Unprepared for resistance, the Germans withdrew – for the moment.

GHETTO REVOLT

The ZOB, commanded by Mordechai Anielewicz, knew the Germans would be back. They now began preparing for the final battle. Along with rival fighters from the Zionist *Zydowski Związek Wojskowy* (ZZW or Jewish Fighting Union) they dug shelters and built bunkers amid

the partly deserted ghetto.

The Warsaw ghetto rising had been the doomed action of a people with nothing to live for. Some 5,000 people were killed in the fighting. According to Stroop's report, 7,000 Jews who were taken captive were shot on the spot. Another 7,000 were transported to Treblinka. Most of the remaining Jews were deported to the ghetto at Lublin, from where their ultimate destination was the death camp at Majdanek.

Jürgen Stroop survived the war, but he paid for his crimes. Captured by the Americans and sentenced to death for atrocities committed in Greece, he was handed over to the Poles. Tried for the ghetto massacre, he was again sentenced to death. On 8 September 1951, he was hanged from a gallows set up in the ruins of Warsaw's Jewish ghetto.

GHETTO REVOLT

WITH THE SUICIDE of Adam Czerniakow, the Nazi-appointed Jewish council lost any remnant of authority in the ghetto, and power began to move towards the young firebrands who advocated resistance to the Germans. Members of cultural organisations such as the *Ha-Shomer ha-Ze'ir* and the *Dror He-Halutz* formed the Jewish Fighting Organisation or ZOB, and began to actively resist the oppressors. The German *Aktion* of January 1943, designed to clear the ghetto, was abandoned after the first outbreak of resistance. Most of the ZOB leadership was killed in the fighting.

On 19 April 1943, the second day of Passover, the SS came back. SS-Brigadeführer Stroop deployed 2,000 men, heavily armed with flamethrowers, explosives and grenades. He expected to clear the ghetto within three days: it took him a month. Stroop tried to entice the fighters into a head-on attack, but the poorly armed Jewish fighters stood no chance in a stand-up fight. Instead they used partisan tactics – ambushes from concealed positions, always with an escape route – they managed to hold their ground.

On the third day, Stroop changed his methods. Now he would destroy the ghetto building by building. In spite of all the ZOB could do, the SS systematically turned every part of the ghetto into piles of rubble, using smoke, gas, and flamethrowers to clear the cellars and sewers. On 16 May, Stroop ordered the destruction of the huge Synagogue on Tlomackie Street, as an endpiece to the destruction.

German soldiers watch as the ghetto burns, building by building. Although the Jewish fighters fought with fanatical bravery, there could only be one outcome to the battle, and by the middle of May the Warsaw ghetto had been eliminated, its people dead or deported and its buildings razed to the ground.



Above: Between April and July 1942, transports of Jews from the east, from Germany and from all over occupied Europe began arriving at the Warsaw ghetto. Few would stay their long: the Germans began to clear the Warsaw ghetto in the same month as the last transports arrived.



Above: Elderly Jews are gathered at the Umschlagplatz before being loaded onto cattle cars for the 80 kilometre journey to Treblinka, north east of Warsaw. In the three months to September 1942 more than 250,000 of Warsaw's Jews were gassed at the camp.



Hitler wanted to mobilise Germany. His motorways were to be the eighth wonder of the modern world. With them he secured a great propaganda coup, a valuable military tool and realised the promise of full employment for the workers.

THE FÜHRER'S ROADS



On 23 September 1933, Adolf Hitler broke ground for the Autobahn from Frankfurt. The first Reich section, the Frankfurt-Darmstadt stretch, was opened on 19 May 1935; such was the pace of construction that by 15 December 1938, 3,000 km had been finished.

This aerial view of an Autobahn is a familiar sight to modern eyes but novel to the peoples of the world in the 1930s. The car was becoming an affordable reality to the middle classes at least. Mass car-ownership necessitated the development of a brand-new concept of motoring. Hitler had the foresight and the means to carry through the public works, but wanted men in tanks not cars to fill them.



THE MISSION OF THE Reich *Autobahn* is to become Adolf Hitler's road... To honor him, not only today, but for generations to come."

In the popular imagination the creation of the *Autobahn* is inextricably linked with Adolf Hitler. The idea had however been developed long before the Nazi seizure of power. In 1924, in Rome, the first modern automobile-oriented road, the *autostrada*, was opened for use by fast-moving traffic. Speed was assured through limited access.

In the years after World War I, the Weimar government gave the go-ahead in 1922 for the nine km Avus highway near Berlin, a similar limited-access road used to give rapid access to the suburbs. The Avus was actually planned in 1912 by the *Automobil-Verkehrs-und Übungsstrasse GmbH* (Automobile, Transport, and Manoeuver Road Ltd). In 1922, a *Kraftwagenstrasse* (motorcar road) 20 km long between Cologne and Bonn was opened.

MOTORWAY TECHNOLOGY

But the growth of automobile traffic during the 1920s created the need for a completely different form of highway that would enable traffic to move at "great speeds with increased safety." But Germany at that time did not have the financial or technical ability to construct a motorway network. Nevertheless preliminary development work on the *Autobahn* concept was carried out by semi-private associations. These included *Studiengesellschaft für Automobilstrassenbau*; STUFA (the Research Group for Automobile Road Construction), founded in 1924, and the *Verein zur Vorbereitung der Autostrasse Hamburg-Frankfurt-Basel*; HAFRABA (Association to Prepare for the Hamburg-Frankfurt-Basel Auto Road), founded in 1926, which planned the Frankfurt-Mannheim-Heidelberg stretch as the first section.

But, from the beginning, Hitler had in mind the construction of a nationwide motorway network. This vision first saw light with the promulgation on 27 June 1933 of a Law to Create a Reich *Autobahn* Agency (RAB) under Julius Dorpmüller, then Director of the *Deutsche Reichsbahn*, and appointed engineer Fritz Todt as General Inspector of the German Road System.

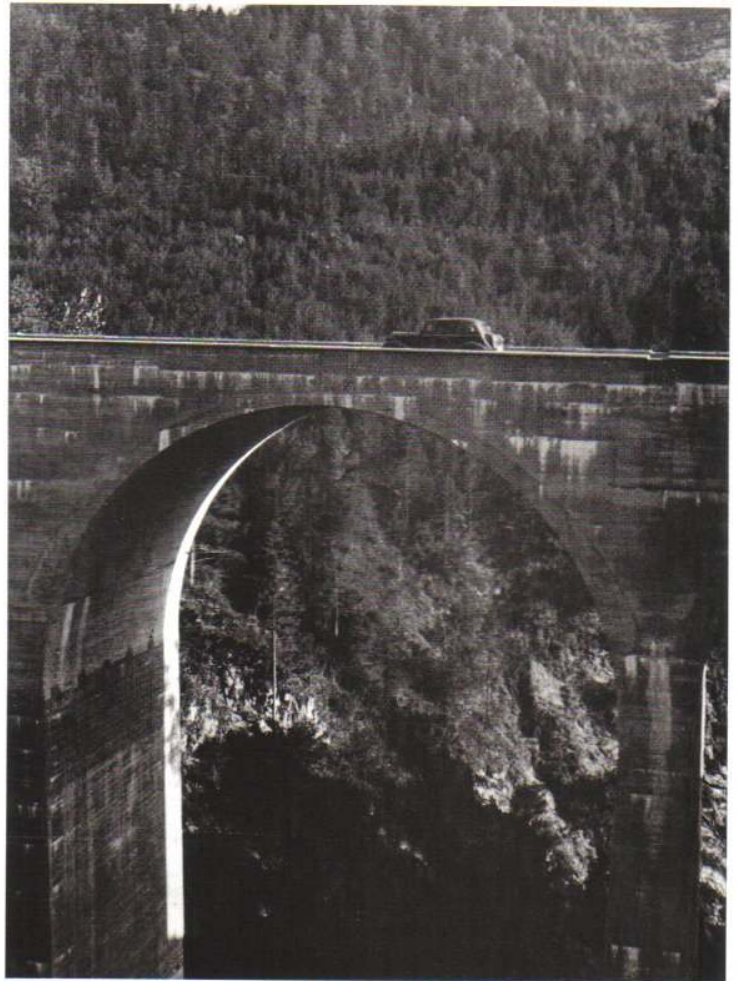
MASSIVE UNDERTAKING

The HAFRABA became the GEZUVOR, or *Gesellschaft zur Vorbereitung der Reichs Autobahn* (Society to Prepare for the Reich *Autobahn*). The law also proposed the building of the following stretches, a massive undertaking of a total of 6,900 km of motorway:

1. Lübeck-Hamburg-Hannover-Kassel-Frankfurt
2. Stettin-Berlin-Leipzig-Hof-Nuremberg-Munich
3. Aachen-Cologne-Magdeburg-Berlin
4. Saarbrücken-Kaiserslautern-Mainz-Frankfurt Fulda-Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden-Breslau-Beuthen
5. Saarbrücken-Landau-Bruchsal Ludwigshafen-Stuttgart-Ulm-Munich Berchtesgaden
6. Hamburg-Wittenberg-Spandau-Berlin Glogau-Breslau

The specifications dictated that the *Autobahn* have a breadth of 24 m at the crown and be divided into two lanes, each 7.5 m wide. They were separated by a middle strip 5 m wide; each side with an edge strip of 2 m. The roadway consisted mostly of tamped concrete 20 cm thick. *Autobahn* routes were to blend into the landscape, harmoniously swerving or with bold curves, and were conceived as gigantic total artworks. Bridges in particular, whose architecture was oriented on models of the 19th century, were intended as monolithic statements of the Nazi aesthetic.

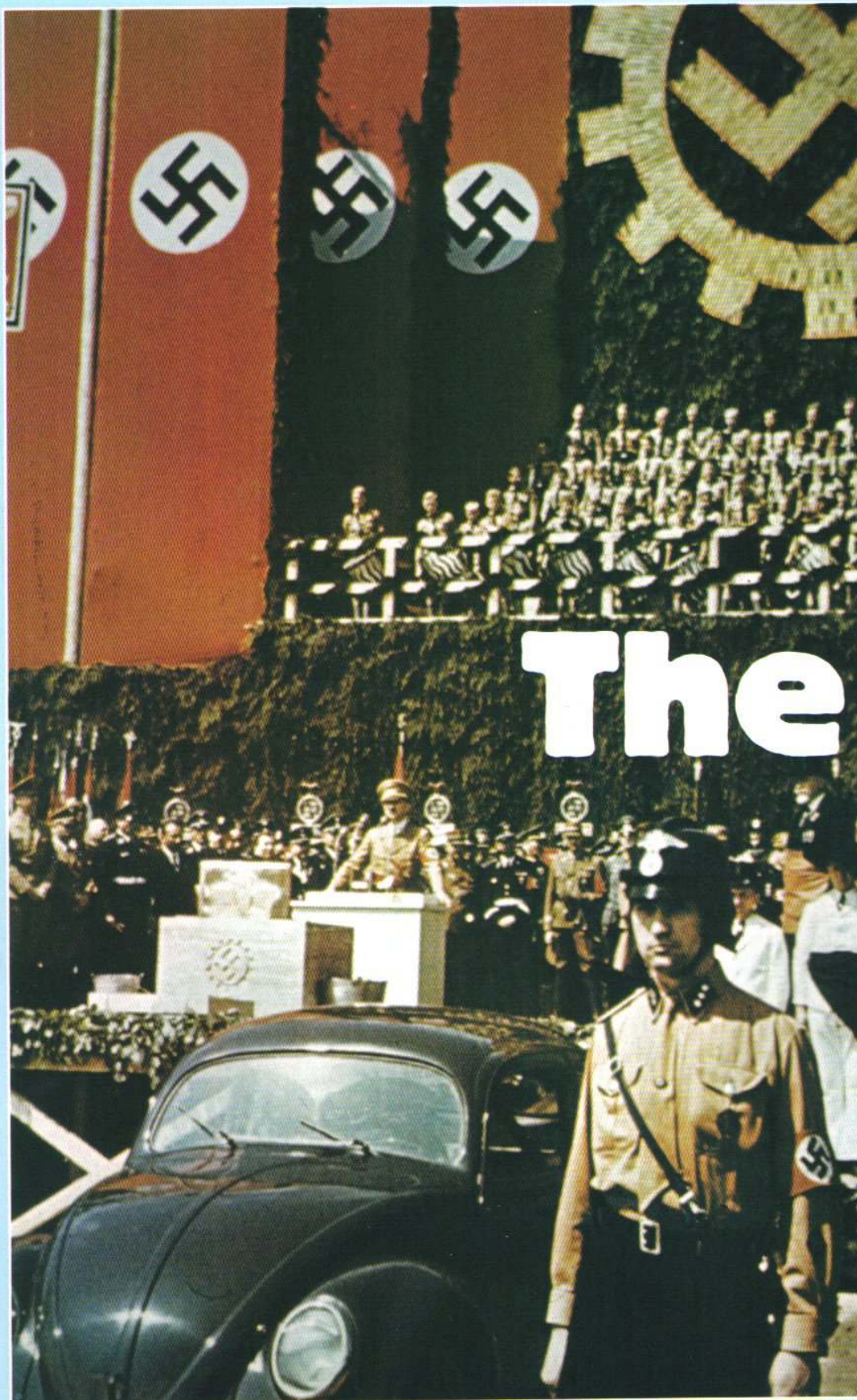
Hitler proclaimed to the world and to the German nation that the Reich *Autobahnen* were symbols



Above: The *Autobahn* bridges mostly of hewn natural stone, often crossed vast expanses. They were conceived as symbols of eternity, so echoing the boast that the Reich would last a thousand years.

Below: Hitler addresses an audience of journalists, workers and Nazi para-militaries on the occasion of the start of the *Autobahn* linking Salzburg on 21 March 1934.





The People

THE VOLKSWAGEN "Beetle" designed by Ferdinand Porsche was to be offered at affordable prices to the German people and was intended to introduce mass mobilisation to Germany.

In the creation of the VW an industrial investment was linked to a socio-political goal whereby the automobile would lose its character as a status symbol for the wealthy and would bring the dream of independent travel to millions of ordinary Germans.

Prototypes of the sedan, coupe and convertible were ready by 1936, but the automobile industry, which Hitler had chosen to finance the VW and produce it in its own factories, delayed the project. Eventually, a frustrated Hitler transferred production to a private factory founded by the German Labour Front (RAD) in the "City of the KdF car" - Wolfsburg.

The Strength Through Joy (KdF) organisation issued savings certificates to the nation with the advertising slogan "Save five Marks a week if you want to drive your own car!" But none of the 336,000 people who placed

an order ever saw one, as the war intervened and the production facilities were turned over to making a military version of the car. It was only in 1961 that those who had joined the savings plan were compensated to the tune of DM 600 towards the cost of a new car.

By the end of the war both the Volkswagen factory and the city of Wolfsburg were in ruins, as Allied aircrews had targetted the Volkswagen plant. Allied attempts to revive the West German auto industry after the war centred on the Volkswagen, and in little more than a decade the company was producing half of West Germany's motor vehicles. By 1984 the "Beetle" had become the world's top-selling car with over 20 million having been produced.

Left: Hitler's propagandists were way ahead of their time with their marketing strategy. With a backdrop of resplendent swastikas and Hitler Youth drummers, the Führer announces the arrival of an automotive legend. The 'Beetle' was a huge hit at late 1930s motor shows and captured the public imagination.



Above: Hitler is photographed with (from left to right) Heinrich Himmler, Ferdinand Porsche and Dr Robert Ley. Porsche was commissioned to build the popular Volkswagen, and presented the Führer with a model at his 49th birthday celebrations on 20 April 1938.



Above: Men of the 23rd Pioneer Battalion based in Spandau scrutinise a 'Beetle' delivered to them in February 1939. The cars that had originally been earmarked for those in the KdF ownership scheme were delivered to fighting units, and were classified as leichter Personenkraftwagen.

ple's Car

Below: Flanked by cabinet minister von Papen to his right, Hitler attends the Berlin International Motorshow in 1935. The Reichs Chancellor had a life-long passion for the motorcar, and was keen to prove Germany a world leader in motorsports and utilitarian travel alike.



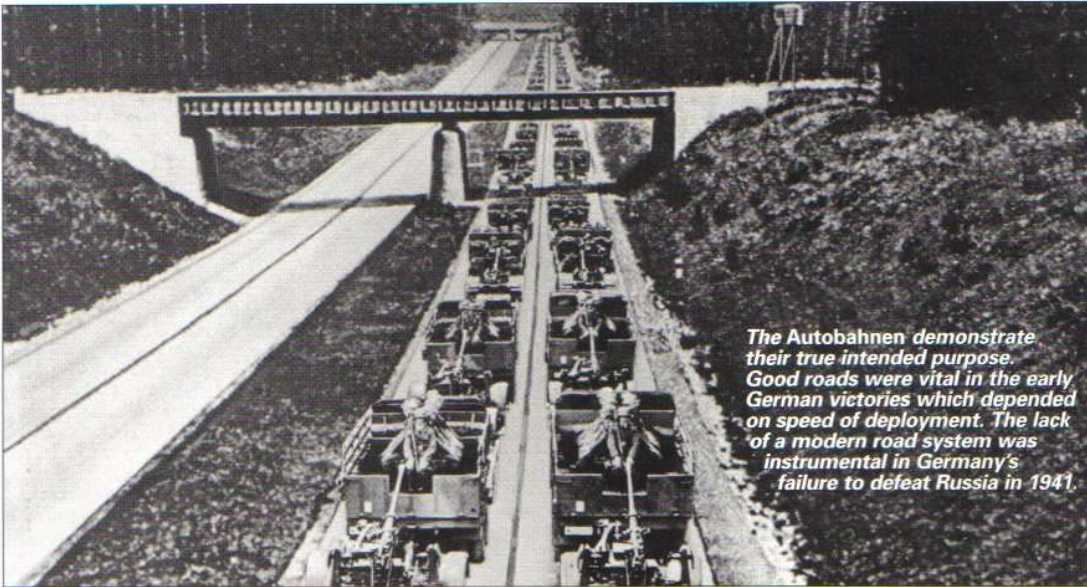
Der KdF Wagen

Above: An artist's impression of the future of German motoring. The slick white Autobahn promised the average German family easy and fast access to their holiday destination in their new People's Car. But the advertiser's fiction that enticed so many workers to part with their money never saw reality under the Third Reich. The KdF organisation then fraudulently diverted the savings into their own projects.

Below: All production work on the 'Beetle' at Wolfsburg was diverted to the building of its military counterpart – The Kübelwagen. This tough vehicle – the German equivalent of the Willys jeep – was standard issue to every German division throughout the war. Some 55,000 were produced by late 1944 before being halted due to intensive bombing of the Volkswagen facilities. The model seen here has a centrally mounted MG 34 and special tyres to cope with the Western Desert terrain.



INSIDE THE THIRD REICH



The Autobahnen demonstrate their true intended purpose. Good roads were vital in the early German victories which depended on speed of deployment. The lack of a modern road system was instrumental in Germany's failure to defeat Russia in 1941.



"Fulfillment of the simple transportation function is not the ultimate meaning of German road construction. The German road must be an expression of its landscape and an expression of the German essence."

Fritz Todt, 1934

of a resurgent Germany. The Fatherland could now boast of a modern progressive infrastructure, a world leader in modern construction techniques and emphasised the revitalisation of a country humbled for so long by the defeat in the Great War.

FULL EMPLOYMENT

In reality, the purpose of the *Autobahnen* was threefold: as well as being a huge boon to Goebbels's propaganda aims, these massive public works helped to fulfill Hitler's election promises of bringing full

employment, and most importantly, *Autobahnen* planning had included the military perspective from its inception. Transportation policymakers insisted that Adolf Hitler's roads were roads to peace. But, needless to say, the motorised units of the new and strong German *Wehrmacht* would also roll along on them when there was a need to secure the existence and right to live of the German *Volk*. Short-term troop movements could be achieved more quickly on an *Autobahn* than by rail;

so General Heinz Guderian could state in 1940 that "We have enjoyed the blessings of the Reich *Autobahn* on the march to liberate Vienna, and then on the march to the Sudetenland, on the march against Czechoslovakia, against Poland, and against the Western powers. What a joy it is to march within Reich territory."

VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT

The incredible triumph of completing 3,000 km of motorways between 1933 and 1938 was possible only

in a totalitarian state. Obstacles to the program were few: the government could simply confiscate or transform land, almost limitless funds could be diverted to the project and there was an army of laborers to use at will.

The firms which won the lucrative construction projects, won through nepotism and back-handers, enjoyed massive profits. But for the workers employed wages remained low, even after unemployment declined. Nevertheless official pictures showed thousands of eager workers building the Führer's roads. The propaganda ministry wanted to convey the image of a homogenous national socialist community where old divides of class and privilege had been subordinated to the good of the whole.

During the war, parts of the *Autobahn* were destroyed; nonetheless, it is one of the few National Socialist monuments that could be used largely unchanged in postwar Germany. The undoubted benefits of the *Autobahnen* have been a boon to apologists of national socialism, even if not quite as helpful as the boast that Hitler made the trains run on time.

Josef Goebbels opens the Cologne-Stuttgart stretch of the Autobahn on 21 May 1936. On the banks the road's builders look on, whilst in the foreground members of the NSKK transport corps stand to attention.





Reich Labourers

WORK CREATION had been the central justification for *Autobahn* construction even among private planners: "Nowhere can so many unskilled workers find employment as in road building" (HAFRABA spokesman in 1931).

By 1936, employment levels had reached those of the miraculous boom year of 1928. Unemployment was effectively eradicated by 1938.

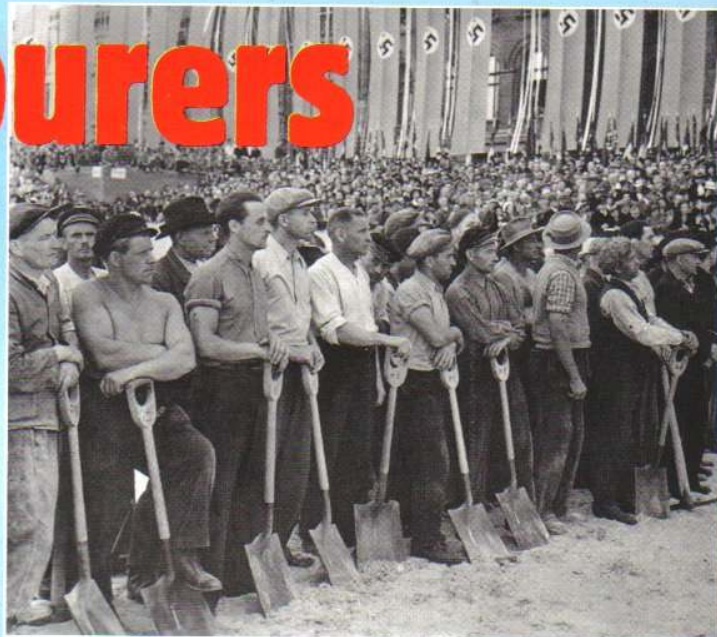
After 1933 employment offices sent hundreds of thousands of jobless men to the *Autobahn* construction sites. Whether qualified or not, they had little choice, as refusal to go resulted in loss of unemployment benefit. But the mentality of a people who had known the hardships of the depression were largely keen to take work even if it meant getting 'on their bike.'

But, as in any industrialised

society there was a hierarchy among the skilled and unskilled workers. Some, particularly those with the appropriate qualifications and experience found work on the new projects to be particularly well-paid.

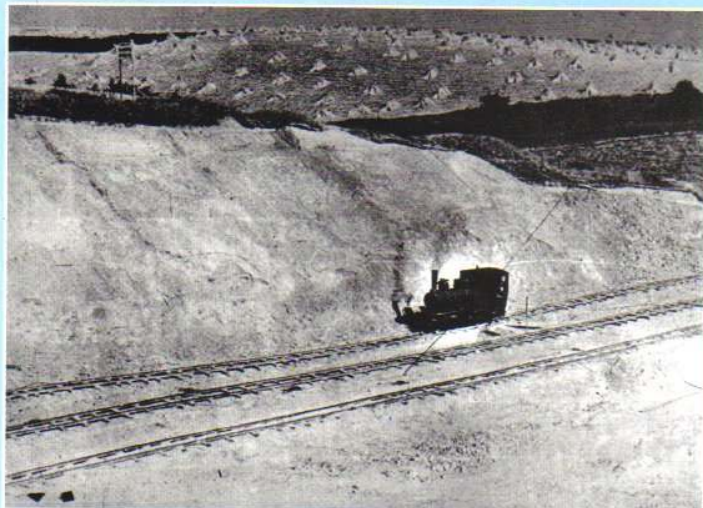
It was not just that there was a shortage of technicians; there was also compensation for geographical displacement as well as the spartan living conditions. Most workers lived apart from their families in paramilitary-style barracks.

For the majority though, the work on the *Autobahn* network was hard and often dangerous, though the more menial and back-breaking tasks, especially that of breaking stones, increasingly devolved upon concentration camp prisoners and foreign workers, both bonded and free.



Above: Hitler had promised full-employment and by the war the labour force even had a shortfall of about half a million men. Largely due to the availability of work and in spite of the gross exploitation of the German working class by the Nazi regime, blue-collar workers remained ever loyal to one person. Even towards the end of the war Albert Speer summed up the prevailing mood with the words "Everything is shit – but we've still got the Führer."

Left: German propaganda films proclaimed that the motorways were built to compliment the natural surroundings. The construction companies however never let the truth get in the way of the bare facts. In the background can be seen the makeshift accommodation provided for the labourers which would be their home for months on end.



Above: Many workers were keen advocates of the Nazi Party. They marvelled at the fringe benefits provided as a sop through Robert Ley's "Strength through Joy" program. Even the less gullible appreciated the introduction of a uniform, that special symbol of social advancement. Ley, who defined socialism as "the relationship of men in the trenches", ordered that the same simple blue uniform had to be worn by everyone in the Labour Front.



Left: Between 1933 and 1939 the industrial labour force expanded by 50 percent to 20.8 million. But the number of accidents and work related illnesses increased from 929,000 to 2,253,000 in the same period. Occupational diseases more than trebled to 23,000 and fatalities rose from 217 to 525.



The Germans instituted an occupation policy of 'divide and rule.' Countrymen turned on one another in efforts to gain personal advancement from the Nazis.

INFORMERS



Above: Karel Kurda and Viliam Gerik were two Czech patriots turned traitor who informed the Gestapo about their comrades and were tried after the liberation of Czechoslovakia. Found guilty, they were executed on 29 April 1947.

Left: Karel Kurda (third from the right) identifies the body of Josef Gabcik – one of Reinhard Heydrich's assassins. Gabcik had committed suicide in the crypt of Saint Cyril and Methodius in Prague, after standing off an SS force sent to capture him.



IN THE COUNTRIES occupied by the Nazis in World War II those members of the population who openly sided with the Germans were known as collaborators. Some of these men and women joined uniformed security or military organisations set up by their occupiers, others actively assisted in the production of military equipment or the running of the Occupation infrastructure.

Many of these people had right wing, anti-Semitic or neo-Fascist views and the defeat of their country was perceived as liberation from a pre-war reactionary government, rigid class structure and the constraints of commerce and banking. Others simply saw Nazi Germany as a dynamic new country of which they wanted to be part.

LIVING WITH THE ENEMY

At the other end of the spectrum were those who actively resisted the occupying powers. Most people lived somewhere in between. The desperate times could bring out the most ungenerous side of human nature, when uncertainty and the desire for self-preservation could lead to informing on your neighbour. After all, few people are driven by political ideology – most people are pragmatists. Nevertheless there is a wide gulf between those who wanted to just get on with life and those who sought petty privileges through minor acts of betrayal.

Within Germany, informing – telling the authorities in secret about the black market or resistance activities of fellow citizens – was a patriotic duty. The victim might be entirely innocent, but the shock of arrest and its stigma could destroy individuals and families.

In Occupied Europe the informer was a sinister and dangerous enemy. No country was spared their curse. They might contact the Nazi security services by anonymous letter – this method was viewed by the

Germans with some suspicion – or call in person at the offices or headquarters of the security services. During the war years not every citizen saw the Resistance as admirable; for some the young men and women were dangerous criminals who would destabilise the accommodation that had been reached with the occupying forces. To these people informing was not a crime. So in the months before D-Day there were more Frenchmen assisting the Germans in hunting the Maquis than there actually were in the French Resistance.

Informers, better known as “stool pigeons” might be placed in Prisoner of War Camps to report on escape plans. Though British informers did exist in Allied PoW camps, the ideal recruits were those men from Occupied Europe who could be pressurised into covert activities through threats to the safety of their families.

BRITISH TRAITORS

In the Channel Islands, the only part of Great Britain to be occupied, there were British informers. A myth was established soon after the liberation that instances of denunciations or collaboration were few and far between. The ugliness of the truth – that a substantial part of the community was involved – was finally laid bare in the 1990s. The motives for informing were extremely varied: the hope of personal gain, the wish to stand well with the Germans, fury at injustice in the distribution of food or the extraction of penalties, concealment of their own illegal activities and a wish to avoid being involved in reprisals. Although the Germans benefited considerably from the ‘help’ of the populace such acts of collaboration did not come under the Treason Act of 1940 and so after the war none of the informers were punished.

The most notorious example of the informer’s work on the islands was that of a man called



“Paddy” who was a friend of Charles Machon, a newspaper printer and one of the producers of the underground newspaper G.U.N.S. – Guernsey Underground News Service. “Paddy” took copies of the newspaper that Machon had given him straight to the *Feldpolizei*. This Judas then accompanied the *Feldpolizei* when they raided Machon’s house in St Peter Port. Two of the men arrested for their involvement with G.U.N.S. died of illness and starvation in prison in Germany in 1944.

DAY OF RECKONING

When the islands were liberated there was none of the brutal “settling of scores” that took place on mainland Europe, however a number of families fled to the local Police cells for their security. One notorious informer on Jersey, Mme

Above: The German occupation of the Channel Islands was comparatively benign, compared to mainland European experiences. Collaboration between the Germans and civilians was endemic, and informers were not prosecuted after the war.

Baudains known as “Mimi the Spy” hid with her son in prison and then, in the face of considerable protests, in a convent before escaping secretly in March 1946 to mainland Britain.

The Jews in hiding in Europe and Germany were often victims of informers. Some Jewish families survived by paying off blackmailers who knew of their existence and threatened to tell the Nazi authorities. In these circumstances a supply of currency or jewellery was the only guarantee of survival.

The most disturbing informers were the Jews in Berlin who collaborated with the Nazi



Left and right: The Danish resistance pay a visit to the Royal Danish Ballet Company in Copenhagen. Here they found an ID card showing that the man in the centre was a collaborator. Ordinary men and women from all over Europe worked with the occupying forces for self-advancement or even just to enable themselves to secure better rations. Denmark largely resisted Nazi policies in WW2 however, and managed to save the lives of all but a very few of their Jewish population.



Below: Belgium's post-war standing was for a long time tainted by the accommodation that many of its citizens and government came to with the occupying forces. Volunteers made up two Waffen SS units – the Wallonie armoured division, and the Flemish legion. With the turn in the tide of the war, bitterness between resistance and collaborators intensified, and after the German collapse thousands were imprisoned and later executed.



Below: The interior of the Gestapo prison in Cologne. The Nazis could never have exerted control over Germany and occupied territories without the collaboration, passive and active, of a large part of the subject populations.

Below: The interior view of a Gestapo cell. Active resisters and innocents 'shopped' by self-serving informers could find themselves subject to the Germans medieval interrogation methods. The blood staining the mattress is testament to their brutality.



authorities in seeking out Jews who had become "submarines"; removing their Star of David badge in an attempt to blend into the population. The small surviving Jewish community was gripped by paranoia. To trust another Jew could result in being handed over to the Gestapo.

Fear of widespread retribution could also lead to people informing. The Germans exacted a terrible revenge on the people of Czechoslovakia following the assassination of SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich. The Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia was attacked on 29 May 1942 by two Czech SOE agents, Jan Kubis and Josef Gabčík, and despite searches, arrests and interrogations Czech patriots hid them in Prague.

BETRAYED

It was Karel Curda, one of their own SOE comrades who betrayed their hiding place to the Gestapo.

On 18 June, Kubis, Gabčík, SOE agents Josef Valčík and Adolf Opalka, along with three local resistance workers were trapped in the church of St Cyril and St Methodus on Ressel Street in Prague.

At dawn the SS attacked. By mid morning Jaroslav Svarc, Opalka and Kubis had been killed or fatally wounded in the firefight. The four in the crypt – Gabčík, Valčík, Jan Hrubý and Josef Bublík – fought on. Shouting defiance they held off 760 SS soldiers. During the day the two groups had killed fourteen SS men and wounded

21. Later in the morning, under orders from the SS, the Prague fire service pumped water into the crypt through a ventilator.

Around midday, after six hours of shooting the SS heard four shots, followed by silence. The four men had kept their last bullets for themselves.

In Prague there was a feeling of relief and a hope that the repression would be over. On 3 July 1942 over 200,000 Czechs packed Wenceslas Square gave the Nazi salute and sang the national anthem. The Germans had totally cowed the population and the people's humiliation was complete.

Karel Curda changed his name to Jerhot, married a German woman and continued to work for the Gestapo. After the war he was traced and brought to trial in June 1945, found guilty he was hanged two years later.

GRASS ROOTS

The *Sicherheitsdienst* or SS Security Service operated in Germany and throughout Occupied Europe. The SD divided its contacts in the field into five classes. They were: *Vertrauensleute* or V-men – Trusted Informants or confidants; *Agenten* or A-men – Agents; *Zubringer* or Z-men – Main Informants; *Helfershelfer* or H-men – Secondary Informants, often with very dubious motives; and *Unzuverlässige* or U-men – those who were corrupt and had to be watched carefully.

Resistance groups might be infiltrated by agents of the SD or *Abwehr* and then betrayed,



ANNE FRANK

FOLLOWING THE NAZI persecution of the Jews, the Frank family left Germany in 1933 for the Netherlands. Anne, the youngest of the family, was able to attend school there even after the occupation by the Germans in 1940. However, the deteriorating situation forced any Jews that had evaded deportation to the camps, underground. Anne's sister Margot received her call-up notice from the Gestapo on 5 July 1942, and four days later, having prepared carefully for this contingency, the family moved into a warehouse behind the father's office building. The Franks were confined to the rear of this house at 9 Prinsengracht 263 in Amsterdam.

There until 1 August 1944, Anne held conversations with her diary "Dear Kitty" and with the eyes of a child describes movingly the fear and misery which hunted them, as well as their hopes and fears. On 4 August 1944 the Gestapo, who had been tipped off by a Dutch informer, discovered the hide-out and deported the Franks to the Eastern extermination camps. Anne's diary remained discarded on the floor of the hiding place and was only recovered by her father after the war.

Right: The view of the back of the house in Prinsengracht where the Franks lived for over two years. The site is now a world famous museum devoted to Holocaust studies.



Dit is een foto, zoals ik me zou wensen, altijd zo te zijn. Dan had ik nog wel een kans om naar Hollywood te komen.

Anne Frank
10 Oct. 1942

(translation)
"This is a photo as I would wish myself to look all the time. Then I would maybe have a chance to come to Hollywood."

Above: An excerpt from Anne's diary, which was published by her father in 1947 as 'Het Achterhuis', or 'The House Behind'.

Right: Anne and her mother did not survive their treatment in the notorious Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. She died there in early 1945 aged 15.



but entrapment by agents provocateurs was a constant fear for innocent citizens. Agents provocateurs were men or women who would tempt people into declaring their secretly held views by pretending to be angry or disenchanted with the Nazi authorities. As the war went against Germany defeatism became an increasingly serious offence within the Reich – punishable by imprisonment and later by death.

'THE GERMAN GLANCE'

Even jokes told to the wrong listener could be fatal, in July 1967 a West Berlin Assize Court established that former People's Court Judge Hans Joachim Rehse had collaborated in passing the death sentence on a priest who had told an anti-Nazi joke to an electrician working at his parsonage.

The Heil Hitler salute that was officially known as the "German Greeting" inspired the expression *der deutsche Blick* – the German glance – a rotation of the head through the widest possible arc to ascertain that no one was eavesdropping before beginning

a conversation in a near whisper.

Sometimes informers could be entirely innocent. When liberal Germans listened to the BBC broadcasts as an attempt to gain a truthful picture of the progress of the war, the favoured technique was to turn the volume to a minimum and for the listener to sit with his or her head close to the speaker. One mother was horrified when her young son returned from school and laughing told her that he had been comparing notes and discovered that his best friend's parents also listened to the radio in this curious manner.

This illustration is not to deny the real fear in some parents that their children might denounce them to the State for anti-Nazi sentiments or activity, so strong was the indoctrination provided by the Nazi youth movements.

With the liberation of Europe some informers were tracked down or exposed. But many others were quick to side openly with the Allied occupation forces, and were at pains to cover their crimes by exposing other "informers".

Right: As the war progressed the Germans and others in the Occupied territories tired of the constant diet on German radio of propaganda and 'perscribes' music. For 'hard' news of the progress of the war and to listen to alternative music, people would tune into foreign radio stations including the BBC. Those listening did so on pain of being sent to concentration camps, and parents risked betrayal from their own children.



Left: German citizens gather and read about the fall of France. With the Reich's enemies in the West defeated or cowed, the Nazis could continue with their internal cleansing policies. The majority of German Jews had been deported by 1942, and of the remaining, many removed their Star of David from their clothing and attempted to integrate into the population at large. But who could they trust? Whoever they talked to could be about to betray them.



Walter von Reichenau

The patrician noble von Reichenau was regarded by his fellow officers as a class traitor for siding wholeheartedly with Hitler. Nevertheless he secured Hitler's power base by aligning the *Reichswehr* with the Nazis.

"NAZI GENERAL"

A DAPPER FIGURE IN uniform, monocle clamped over his right eye, Walter von Reichenau looked the archetypal Prussian officer. Yet despite his name and appearance, von Reichenau was a passionate moderniser and one of the first senior army officers to support Hitler. He loathed the moss-backed conservatism of the aristocratic families that still dominated the German military after the First World War. The antipathy was mutual. *Feldmarshall* Gerd von Rundstedt described von Reichenau as 'a roughneck who used to run around naked when taking physical exercise'

DOUBLE-DYED NOBLE

A 29-year-old career army officer when war broke out in 1914, von Reichenau served on the staff of Colonel Hoffman. His chief kept his nerve when General von Prittwitz wanted to abandon East Prussia in the face of a Russian invasion. Hoffman redeployed the limited German forces to bluff one Russian army into halting, while concentrating every man and gun against the Russian 2nd Army at Tannenberg. Although Hindenburg and Ludendorff took charge in time to receive the

A double-dyed aristocrat related by birth to Bohemian nobility and by marriage to titled Silesian stock, Reichenau was a firm supporter of Hitler's root and branch reforms of the German army, and devoutly wished for a resurgent Germany.



plaudits of victory, it was Hoffman who engineered it. Von Reichenau stayed with Hoffman who was eventually promoted to General and dictated Germany's ruthless peace terms to Russia in 1917.

Von Reichenau survived the drastic reduction of the army after the First World War and became General Blomberg's chief-of-staff in East Prussia. He was attracted to the visionary future promised by Hitler: not just rearmament and the recapture of territories ceded to Poland in 1918, but the concept of a national socialist revolution. He persuaded Blomberg that the army should distinguish between Hitler, the one political leader capable of 'saving' Germany, and the Nazi party. The German officer corps tended to look down on the Nazis as so much lower-class rabble; the behaviour of the SA confirmed their worst suspicions and many officers anticipated a military showdown with the brown shirts if the Nazis were disappointed at the polls.

ARMY OPPOSITION

Persuaded of Hitler's virtues by his chief-of-staff, General Blomberg accepted Hitler's invitation to become his minister of defence in January 1933. Blomberg however could not overcome army opposition to Reichenau's appointment as von Hammerstein-Equord's successor as head of the German army. This post went to Fritsch and the war minister settled for Reichenau being made *Chef der Ministeramt*, and thus his closest assistant. Promoted for the new assignment *Generalmajor* Reichenau took a leading role in Blomberg's attempts to align the army with the Nazi Party, and succeeded in maintaining the army's supremacy over the SA.

Although Reichenau was appalled by the Nazis, whom he called "those swastika men" he respected their methods. An early indication of his attitude came when Hermann Goering, now in charge of the Prussian state police, used the apparatus of law



Reichenau viewed the war in the East as a struggle of competing ideologies. On 10 October 1941, in an order of the day, he announced that the soldier too "was the bearer of a relentless völkisch idea" and should understand "the necessity of the harsh but justified expiation of Jewish subhumanity".

enforcement to conduct an arbitrary purge of political opponents. Addressing a meeting of army commanders, von Reichenau said, "It has to be recognized that we are in a revolution. What is rotten in the state has to go, and that can only happen through terror. The party will ruthlessly proceed against Marxism. The armed forces are to stand at ease, and to offer no support to the persecuted if they seek refuge with the troops." This was a significant change from the *Reichswehr's* previously apolitical stance.

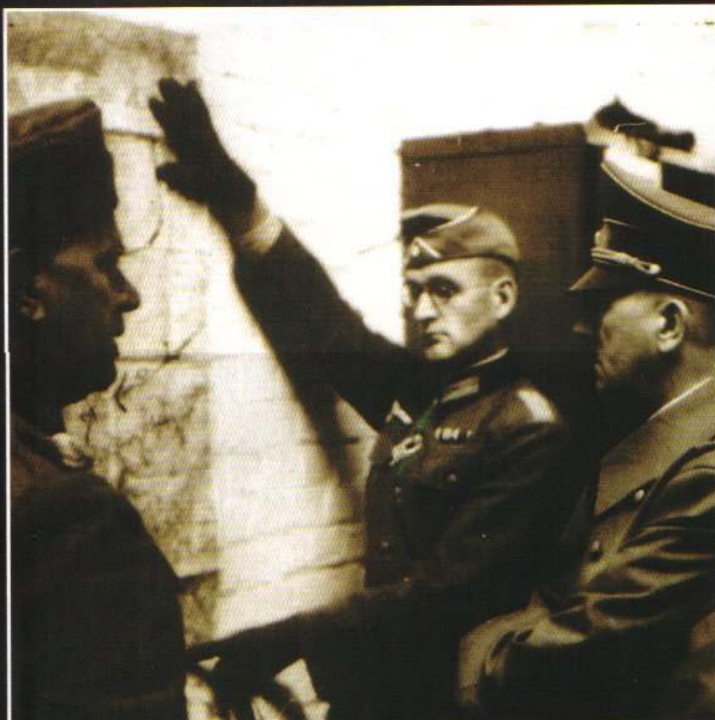
Whether von Reichenau was an active participant in the conspiracy against Ernst Röhm, or one of those duped into believing an SA coup d'état was

imminent, will never be known. On 27 June 1934, Blomberg and von Reichenau met Hitler and presented him with a document purportedly ordering the SA to arm itself for combat against the army. This fabrication surfaced in an *Abwehr* office a few days earlier, the work either of the *Abwehr* itself or Himmler's office. It was one of the key events that triggered Hitler's decision to crush the SA and murder its leadership. Reichenau coordinated the loan of weapons to the SS: the 'Night of the Long Knives' was actually conducted with submachine guns. His office also provided transportation to some of Himmler's execution squads. Two months later, when he issued guidelines for the

political instruction of German soldiers, von Reichenau wrote: "The Reich Chancellor kept his word when he nipped in the bud Röhm's attempt to incorporate the SA in the *Reichswehr*. We love him because he has shown himself to be a true soldier."

ARMY OATH

Reichenau's next political intervention had far heavier consequences. He suggested to Blomberg that the armed forces should be able to win over Hitler if all service personnel swore an oath of allegiance not to the office of the Supreme Commander but to Adolf Hitler as an individual. The army would be Hitler's army first, and Germany's army second. This



Above: The success of Reichenau's 6th Army in the invasion of France in 1940 was rewarded with a leading role in the invasion of Britain; the so-called Operation Sealion. His three divisions were to land in the first wave at Lyme Bay near Weymouth and would then drive on Bristol.

Below: Reichenau at a Hitler address in 1933 is flanked by Admiral Raeder and General von Leeb. Colonel Reichenau's devotion to Hitler, the man of steel, gained him the contempt of fellow aristocrats.



Above: Reichenau takes his ease after a meeting with Hitler. As aid to General von Blomberg, he was instrumental in securing the allegiance of the Army to the Nazi Party. The success of this policy was sealed on 2 August 1934 with the swearing of an oath of allegiance to Hitler.

demonstration of support, Reichenau argued, would convince Hitler that he had no need of rowdy SA types, nor of elected representatives. With the overt backing of the army, Hitler need not look elsewhere for political support. Reichenau dictated the wording of the oath that was sworn on 2 August, before the body of the former commander, President von Hindenburg had time to get cold.

CRAZED DICTATOR

The oath became the excuse for inaction that so many senior figures would take shelter behind when Adolf Hitler's true character became known. Many officers approached by those ready to take action refused to join any conspiracy; they had sworn an oath of loyalty to Hitler. Yet those same men whose moral scruples prevented them from removing the crazed dictator of the 1940s had no such qualms when it came to crushing people identified as racial enemies.

Promoted *Generalleutnant* in 1935, von Reichenau horrified the army high command by arguing for a pre-emptive strike against Czechoslovakia. Over the next four years, Reichenau sided with Hitler again and again as the dictator gambled and won. Hitler's other generals predicted a military confrontation that would catch Germany midway through its rearmament programme, but on every occasion Britain and France

backed down.

In September 1939 *Generalleutnant* von Reichenau commanded the 10th Army (later redesignated 6th Army). His new chief-of-staff was a fastidious general staff officer, Friederich Paulus, a very different personality from his rumbustious commander. Assigned to Army Group South for the invasion of Poland, Reichenau presided over a victorious advance with overwhelming superiority of resources. A triumphant Hitler included him in a rash of promotions, elevating him to full General.

CRUSHING THE FRENCH

In 1940 von Reichenau's 6th Army attacked Belgium while the 18th Army invaded the Netherlands and the panzer forces debouched from the Ardennes to outflank the Maginot defences. It fell to General von Reichenau to take the surrender of King Leopold of Belgium, the concentration of French forces in the path of the 6th Army in full retreat after the breakthrough at Sedan. In July, Hitler rewarded von Reichenau with the baton of a *Feldmarshall*.

For the invasion of Russia, the 6th Army was assigned to von Rundstedt's Army Group South. Von Reichenau's men captured Kiev in September, the collapse of the surrounding pocket netting over half-a-million prisoners-of-war. The vast majority of these unfortunates would die that

Missed Opportunity



Above: The brooding presence of Reichenau lurks in the background as Hitler pores over maps indicating the slowing progress of his Eastern blitzkrieg.

Below: After a summer of glorious victories the Russian winter set in. The first snows of those terrible months were a death knell for the careers of Brauchitsch, Runstedt, Bock, Leeb and Guderian.



winter, herded into open air 'camps' ringed with barbed wire and left without food or shelter.

Reichenau spelt out the difference between the war in the west and the war in the east in an order of the day on 10 October. "The essential goal of this campaign against the Jewish-Bolshevik system is the complete destruction of its instruments of power and the eradication of the Asiatic influence on the European sphere. Thereby the troops too have tasks which go beyond the conventional unilateral soldierly tradition. In the East the soldier is not only a fighter according to the rules of warfare, but also the carrier of an inexorable racial concept and the avenger of all the bestialities which have been committed against the German peoples."

During the terrible first winter in Russia, Hitler sacked many of his generals for their perceived defeatism. Hitler refused to countenance the withdrawal. Among the winners in the purge was von Reichenau. Ironically, knowing his loyalty was unquestioned, von Reichenau ordered a withdrawal himself and pulled back to a more defensible line.

Reichenau did not live long to enjoy his new command. A lifelong physical fitness fanatic, von Reichenau suffered a fatal heart attack on 15 January 1942 after jogging in temperatures of -20 C. He was evacuated to Germany by air ambulance, but his aircraft crashed, killing everyone on board. Reichenau's army had another year to live.



Above: Reichenau's abilities were only belatedly recognised after the mass sackings of the generals by Hitler in the winter of 1941. This left Hitler with fewer options in his choice of commanders for the ongoing struggle in the East.

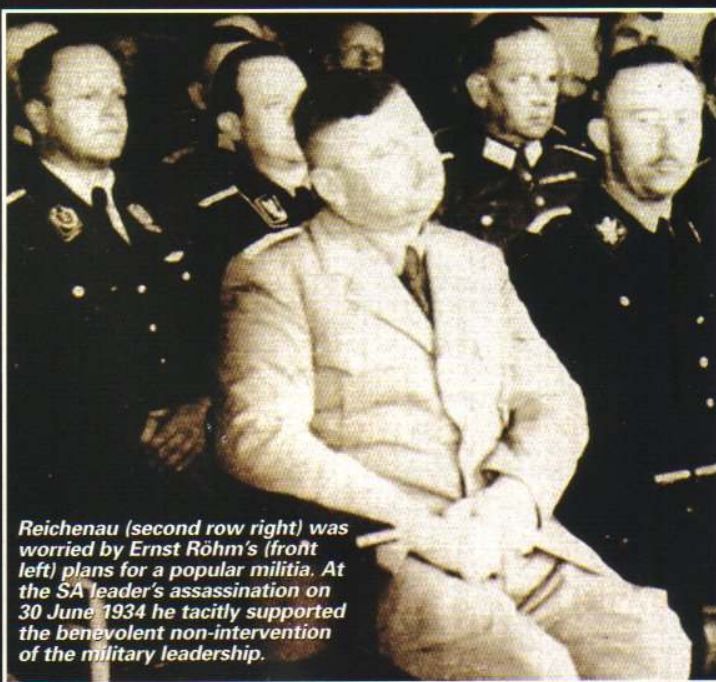
ALTHOUGH REICHENAU was regarded as a traitor to his class, he felt that Germany needed a clean break from its past, and that Hitler was the man for the job.

Doing much to aid the Führer's efforts to secure the allegiance of the army, Reichenau was never Hitler's puppet. He could have had much more influence on Hitler in the 30s, but due to the animosity of his fellow officers he was excluded from enjoying a powerful military post in Berlin.

When Hitler mooted his intentions to violate Belgian and Dutch neutrality in 1940, Reichenau was one of the most vigorous opponents. As 6th Army

commander the thunderstruck Reichenau said that such an action would be "veritably criminal". He attempted to dissuade Hitler on two occasions and also spoke out at the atrocities in Poland. For this he alienated himself permanently from Hitler.

One American author on German resistance to the Nazis wrote that "The more that is learned about Reichenau, the greater force there is to the argument that he alone of the generals of the Nazi era demonstrated the combination of insight, courage, drive and sheer brutality that could have stopped Hitler before disaster overtook the German nation and the world."



Reichenau (second row right) was worried by Ernst Röhm's (front left) plans for a popular militia. At the SA leader's assassination on 30 June 1934 he tacitly supported the benevolent non-intervention of the military leadership.



The End of Blitzkrieg

Russia 1943

The collapse at Stalingrad marked the turn of the tide in the East. Never more would the massed Panzers of the Wehrmacht wreak havoc: from now on, the Red Army was the master of the battlefield.

Weary German troops march through Kharkov, scene of the German army's last great triumph in Russia. Although man-for-man, the German soldier was still the best in the business, years of battle and superior enemy numbers had taken their toll.



TRAPPED IN THE frozen hell of Stalingrad, by 1 January 1943 the soldiers of the German 6th Army knew they were doomed. Reduced to some 150,000 men, up to a third of them were severely ill with typhus and dysentery; all suffered from malnutrition. Deaths from hypothermia were a daily occurrence. But still they held on, without hope of relief. The reduction and final destruction of the Stalingrad pocket occupied seven Soviet armies until the last day of the month: armies that would otherwise have joined their Red Army comrades in a massive drive west.

The Soviet breakthrough at Stalingrad tore a gap in the German front line that was longer than the entire western front in the First World War. Within days of Paulus' surrender, Soviet tank battalions raced across the open steppe west of the river Donets, their wide tracks and low ground pressure enabling them to overtake scattered groups of retreating Germans. Ahead lay the Dnieper crossings and giant hydro-electric plant at Zaporozhe; north, and about to be surrounded, lay the industrial city of Kharkov. The latter was abandoned by its SS garrison on 14 February, ignoring Hitler's orders to hold fast.

COUNTER ATTACK

Kharkov was the first Soviet city to be liberated. Eighteen months of Nazi occupation had reduced its population by 25 per cent: some 100,000 young men and women had been deported to Germany as slave labourers. Many people, mostly the old and very young, had died during the winter: As Hitler and Goering had both boasted, Russian civilians would be allowed to starve. About 15,000 people had been shot out of hand: the teachers at the university, Communist party members, Soviet government officials and all Jews. A Quisling-style

administration was set up in Kharkov, a combination of Ukrainian nationalists, gangsters and adventurers. Schools were closed, but the black market flourished. The *Burgomeister* and his mistress fled with the SS when the city was abandoned.

With chilling symmetry, the NKVD took over the Gestapo headquarters and its basement torture chambers. A letter box was attached to the building for people to denounce their neighbours anonymously as collaborators. Starving Russian soldiers wandered the streets, released from a nearby POW camp but liable to arrest by the NKVD which regarded all ex-prisoners as traitors for having surrendered. BBC correspondent Alexander Werth was stunned at the indifference shown to these living skeletons, slumped near to death in the snow.

HITLER AND MANSTEIN

Hitler flew to Zaporozhe to confer with his commanders. At quiet moments in the conference the sound of Russian artillery could just be made out. Field Marshal von Manstein persuaded the Führer to let him conduct the battle his way, instead of the rigid defence Hitler favoured. The result was a tactical masterstroke, still studied in military academies today.

Manstein let the Soviet advance continue while he assembled a powerful striking force on its flanks. SS panzer divisions *Leibstandarte*, *Reich* and *Totenkopf*, combined with five army panzer divisions and the *Grossdeutschland* division counter-attacked with massive support from a newly reinforced Luftwaffe. In what he dubbed his 'backhand blow', Manstein drove east to cut off all the Russian forces that had broken over the Donets. The SS panzer corps stormed Kharkov in mid-March. The four Soviet tank corps strung out between the Donets and Zaporozhe were annihilated.

The Battle of Kharkov stabilised the front just as the spring thaw imposed its annual



Above: Panzers move through the outskirts of Kharkov as von Manstein's Army Group Don retakes the city in March 1943.

Below: An SS officer urges his troops on outside Kharkov. Without interference from Hitler, Manstein was able to fight the Soviets in a fluid style, drawing the Red Army in traps and then counter-attacking with vicious efficiency, destroying the Soviet 3rd Tank Army in the process.



halt on military operations. The startling recovery of the *Ostheer* after the Stalingrad disaster unsettled Stalin, who made a tentative diplomatic approach to Hitler via Swedish diplomats. But the Führer was still set on decisive victory and the extermination of what he persisted in regarding as the

Jewish-Bolshevik threat. Hitler's army was outnumbered 2:1 in men and by 5:1 in tanks and guns, but training and tactical leadership were far superior to that of the Red Army. If the odds were too unfavourable for a third successive summer offensive in 1943, the German army high command was nevertheless



Above: The mighty Tiger spearheaded the German attack, supported by the new Panther and swarms of upgraded Panzer IIIs and Panzer IVs. The Tigers were dominant when they could be brought into action, but they were slow and lacked range. The Panthers promised much, but premature use meant that they were unreliable, and many broke down

Below: The boundless Russian steppe offered perfect tank-fighting terrain, but the long lines of sight also helped the thousands of Red Army anti-tank guns dug in around the Kursk salient.



determined on an attack.

There was little thought of knocking Russia out of the war, however much Hitler clung to the dream of final victory. His generals wanted to attack in order to cripple the Soviet army. With the loss of North Africa, it was only a matter of time before the Allies attacked Italy or even landed in France. Unless the Red Colossus could be smashed before then, the nightmare loomed of a two-front war that Germany could never win.

KURSK SALIENT

The objective was a salient projecting 150 km into the German lines between Belgorod and Orel. Centred on the town of Kursk, it was about 200 km wide at its base. Initial orders for the offensive were issued by OKH on 13 March: Army Group Centre would attack from the north with a massively reinforced panzer group, while Army Group South struck from the opposite side of the salient. The Soviets had never previously managed to halt a determined German assault short of the strategic depths of their vast hinterland. The German high command assumed – and the Soviet generals feared – that it would be no different this time. The panzers had to break through little more than 100 km to cut off all Soviet units in the salient; further exploitation might take them back to the Don at Voronezh. In fact, the follow-up operation envisaged by OKH was Operation *Parkplatz*: the storming of Leningrad. Nine divisions were earmarked for the assault and the superheavy siege artillery used to

batter Sevastopol into submission was en route north. It was not destined to arrive.

Kursk was such an obvious objective that the Russians began fortifying it almost as soon as the Germans decided to attack it. However, the Red Army planned new offensives of its own, north and south of Kursk, scheduled to open the moment the German attack stalled. Stalin and his most senior commanders gambled that they could hold Kursk against the elite panzer divisions, absorb the full strength of the German blow, then unleash a multi-front offensive that would liberate the Ukraine. However anxious some of his frontline commanders were, Marshals Rokossovsky and Zhukov were confident the Red Army of 1943 was far more proficient than the stumbling giant of 1941 or the gallant amateurs of 1942.

ZITADELLE POSTPONED

Hitler postponed his attack several times in order to employ the latest heavy tanks now in production. When the offensive, code-named *Zitadelle* finally opened on 5 July, it was spearheaded by 147 Tiger Is, 200 Panthers and 89 Elephant assault guns. The bulk of the panzer battalions were still using the older medium tanks, 844 panzer IIIs and 913 panzer IVs took part. However, the Soviets had made excellent use of the delay and had some 700 JSU-152 'animal killer' tank destroyers lurking among their nine lines of entrenchments. Russian infantry dug deeply into the black earth of central Russia: networks of

The two sides were evenly matched numerically, but the Germans still had the advantage in training and experience, and upgunned versions of the Panzer IV were well able to take on the Soviet T-34. But the Russians were fighting from defensive positions, and the Germans ran into a wall of anti-tank fire.



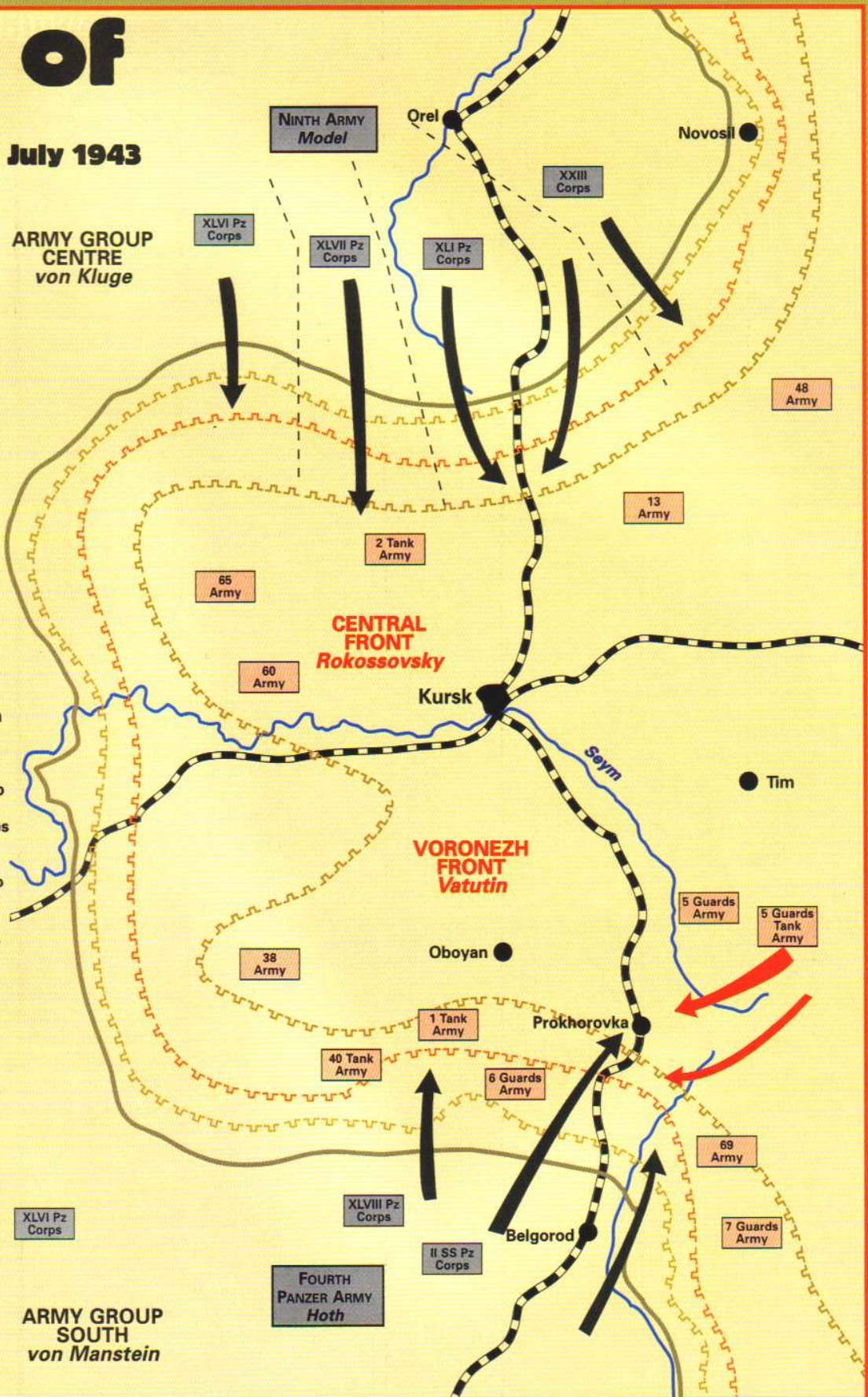


Battle of Kursk

July 1943

THE GERMAN ATTACKERS taking part in Operation Citadel were disposed in two large army groups. To the north was Army Group Centre, commanded by Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge and based around the three Panzer Corps of *Generaloberst* Walther Model's powerful Ninth Army. Von Manstein's Army Group South was composed of *Generaloberst* Hermann Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, spearheaded by XLVIII Panzer Corps and II SS Panzer Corps, comprising the best units Germany could field. The plan was for the two great arms of a pincer movement to cut off the salient around Kursk. Nearly a million men in 50 divisions, 16 of them armoured, were poised to wipe out the Red Army.

GOOD INTELLIGENCE and German delays meant that the Soviet High Command was well prepared for the attack. Between them, Rokossovsky's Central Front and Vatutin's Voronezh Front massed 20,000 artillery pieces to stand off the attack, and a series of huge defensive lines tens of kilometres in depth were constructed. Equipped with large numbers of anti-tank weapons, these defences were sure to give the Germans greater difficulty than they had encountered in the summer campaigns of previous years. To the rear, Konev's powerful Steppe Front acted as a strategic reserve, its Tank Armies ready to shore up the defences, to blunt any German penetrations and to counterattack should the chance be offered. On 12 July, 5th Guards Tank Army threw back II SS Panzer Corps in the largest armoured battle in history, with over 1,000 tanks in bloody combat around the little village of Prokhorovka.





Above: Troops and tanks of the 3rd SS Panzer Division Totenkopf head into the cauldron at Kursk. Along with the Leibstandarte and Das Reich divisions, Totenkopf formed the II SS Panzer Corps. Under the command of Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen SS Paul Hausser, the corps spearheaded Hoth's 4th Panzer Army.

Below: The SS nearly broke through the Soviet defences, only being stopped by a fierce counter attack launched on 12 July by General Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army.



Below: Soviet prisoners are taken at Kursk. Compared to the campaigns in 1941 and 1942, their numbers were tiny. In place of the sweeping movements of previous summer campaigns the Germans managed to penetrate less than 30 kilometres in a week.



underground bunkers connected by trenches were defended by clusters of concealed anti-tank guns. Over 3,000 mines were laid per kilometre of front. And the Russians were sufficiently forewarned to fire an artillery bombardment on the Germans' jumping-off points two hours before the German preliminary barrage began.

24 HOUR WARFARE

The German 9th Army, commanded by the brilliant *Generaloberst* Model, made little headway into the northern shoulder of the salient. In savage fighting that barely let up over the short summer nights, his men advanced barely 10 km.

On 12 July Army Group Centre was attacked all across its front by Soviet forces bent on liberating Orel; the ground won at such terrible cost had to be abandoned as 9th Army pulled back to defend its own flank.

Zitadelle went better in the south, where the SS panzer corps smashed remorselessly through each line of defence. Again, the fighting went on 24 hours a day. The intense summer heat triggered thunderstorms by the end of each afternoon. Both sides were very active in the air, the Luftwaffe only able to dominate selected areas of the front, the Soviets flying thousands of bomber sorties against German supply routes. The tank battles culminated in the celebrated action around the small town of Prokhorovka on 10-12 July; the SS vanguard, led by *Totenkopf* tore through the Soviet 1st Tank Army, overrunning the 71st Guards Rifle Division. Stalin sat at his desk in the Kremlin day and night, demanding hourly situation reports. He consented to the release of 5th Guards Tank Army and the 5th Guards Army from the reserve: they moved up, ready to counter-attack.

As the Soviet reserves counter-attacked at Prokhorovka, Hitler summoned Field Marshals Manstein and Kluge to Rastenburg. Kluge reported that Army Group Centre could not

maintain the offensive: 9th Army had suffered 20,000 casualties in a week and the Russians' own offensive was so powerful Orel might be lost. Manstein argued for one more supreme effort, arguing that if he committed his last reserves, he might yet break through to Kursk.

ON THE BACK FOOT

Hitler called off Zitadelle and ordered the SS panzer corps to be transferred to the west. The *Ostheer* would go over to the defensive and contain the Russian drive on Orel. What he and his generals failed to realise was that the Red Army was poised to launch the greatest offensive it had yet undertaken.

Model was unable to prevent the loss of Orel, which was liberated on 5 August. The Soviet Bryansk and Kalinin Fronts began new offensives in the north, liberating Smolensk in September. Another major attack developed south of Kursk, forcing Manstein back to the scene of his triumph in the spring. This time there was no power available for a backhand blow: all the Germans could do was fight a succession of rearguard actions as they withdrew, giving up Belgorod on 5 August and eventually abandoning Kharkov itself. Army Group South retreated to prepared positions running from Zaporezhe to the Black Sea. The Soviets reached the isthmus connecting the Crimea to the mainland. The German 17th Army was isolated.

RED ARMY SETBACK

By the end of September the Red Army had reached the Dnieper north and south of Kiev. An ambitious airborne operation was mounted in order to capture the crossings at Kanev and Bukrin, some 90 km downstream, but poor intelligence resulted in one of the three parachute divisions landing right on top of 10th *Panzergrenadier* division. The paratroopers were destroyed and the hard-won bridgehead at Bukrin eventually abandoned.

Commanders of Genius



Manstein

Adolf Hitler described Erich von Manstein as, "Perhaps the best brain that the General Staff Corps has produced." He was creator of the plan to conquer France in 1940, he smashed Sevastopol into submission, and he was the general who used the brilliant counter attack at Kharkhov to show that there was still bite in the Wehrmacht after Stalingrad. Manstein favoured the Kursk offensive, but only if it could be carried out quickly. In the event delays meant that the Soviets built massive defenses, and Manstein's forbodings proved accurate.



Kluge

Gunther von Kluge, whose Army Group Centre provided the northern wing of the Kursk attack, had little faith in the plan and left most of the operational control to Model. Kluge was a very bright but less than direct man, prone to play both sides of any argument. Although he persuaded the Führer to delay the offensive at Kursk, he also complained in writing about the delay – probably to cover himself against blame if the offensive failed. Kluge toyed with the opposition to Hitler, but never whole-heartedly. He committed suicide in Normandy in 1944.



Model

Walther Model was known as 'the Führer's Fireman', always sent to where the battle was hottest. It was Model who persuaded Hitler to delay the offensive at Kursk, waiting until everything was ready and his units had re-equipped with the newest heavy tanks like the Tiger and the Panther, which had yet to be fully tested in battle. Model's battle went badly from the start, and he eventually had to withdraw in the face of massive Soviet counter-attack towards Orel. However, Model's failure did little to effect the Führer's faith in his General.



Hoth

An infantry commander who switched to tanks, Hermann Hoth was one of Germany's leading armoured experts. His major achievements came in Russia, commanding a Panzergruppe during operation Barbarossa before taking command of 4th Panzer Army in June 1942. He held open the corridor which enabled Kleist's Army Group to escape after Stalingrad, and in the battle for Kursk his Panzer Army almost broke through the Soviet defences. When Hoth urged withdrawal after the Soviet Autumn offensives, he was retired by Hitler.



Zhukov

Former Red Army cavalryman who rose to become one of the most outstanding military commanders of World War II. After his successful defence of Moscow in 1941, Zhukov became Stalin's military deputy. He spent much of the time at the various fronts, and his influence can be seen in the successful defence of Leningrad and in the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk. These were massive hammer blows from which the German invaders were never to recover, and led directly to Zhukov's greatest triumph – the German surrender in Berlin.



Rokossovsky

Of Polish descent, Konstantin Rokossovsky survived arrest by the NKVD in Stalin's pre-war purge of the Soviet army, and returned to active service in 1940. An extremely competent field commander, his abilities were highly respected by his German opponents. Rokossovsky commanded the Central Front at Kursk, and the immense line of defences he created blunted the attacks of Model's 9th Army. At the end of the War his 2nd Belorussian Front swept across north Germany to link up with Montgomery's 21st Army Group.



Vatutin

One of the brightest of all Red Army commanders, Nikolai Vatutin was a pre-war staff officer who, apart from a spell at Leningrad, spent the first year of the war on the General Staff. Appointed to command the Southwestern Front at the end of 1942, he was soundly defeated by Manstein at Kharkhov. He more than made amends at Kursk, where he commanded the Voronezh Front. By 1944 Vatutin was proving to be a very capable field general, but his career was cut short when he was killed by Ukrainian partisans.



Konev

Ivan Konev had been tasked with the defence of Moscow in 1941, and as the Germans advanced Stalin wanted him arrested and executed. Zhukov stood up for Konev and saved one of Russia's greatest commanders. Konev's Steppe Front was the strategic reserve for the battle of Kursk, his armies supporting Vatutin and Rokossovsky. After the battle Konev and Vatutin worked in tandem, driving deep into the Ukraine. At the end of the war, Konev and Zhukov were rival commanders chasing the greatest prize of the war – Berlin.



Top: In spite of their new weaponry, the German attack was little more than a battering match, and in a war of attrition the Soviets had the upper hand. The Red Army's magnificent T-34 was just as good as most German tanks – and its artillery was better and much more numerous.

Above: The repulse of the German offensive at Kursk and the successful Soviet counter offensive which retook Orel finally removed any German threat to Moscow. It also proved to ordinary Russian soldiers that they could beat even a full-strength Wehrmacht.

Right: Surviving members of the elite Leibstandarte division show the strain at the end of the battle for Kursk. In spite of their ferocious attacks, the SS Panzer Corps suffered catastrophic losses during Operation Citadel.



Above: For once, Stalin listened to his generals and accepted a defensive strategy. Men and weaponry were poured into the Kursk salient, ready for the German attack. But Stalin was worried. He had a right to be: the Red Army had never yet beaten off a German summer offensive.

However, a tiny enclave on the west bank at Lyutlezh, 20 km north of Kiev was secretly reinforced by 3rd Tank Army. On 3 November the German forces surrounding the bridgehead were shattered by some 2,000 guns. Russian tanks broke through to threaten Kiev with encirclement and the city was abandoned three days later.

RED TIDE

The front continued to roll westwards during November as the Red Army recaptured Zhitomir and Korosten. Once again, Manstein bided his time, fending off Hitler's demands for immediate action. The Russians became over-extended as their mechanised units out-ran their supply columns. Their air support diminished because it took time to repair captured airfields – although the Germans abandoned their practice of burying mines on the runways when they learned that the Russians used

German prisoners to clear them. Manstein counter-attacked and re-took both towns, re-establishing the direct rail link with Army Group Centre. However, a Soviet breakthrough at Cherkassy combined with Hitler's refusal to retreat from the one stretch of the Dnieper still under German control, left a dangerously exposed salient jutting into Russian territory by the year's end.

Holding the Germans at Kursk, then attacking at Orel and Kharkov cost the Red Army 863,000 casualties; the tactical superiority of the German army still compensated for its numerical disadvantage. German losses in the Kursk offensive were 50,000 men and 500-700 tanks and assault guns. While the panzer divisions were not wiped out, it was the last time Germany would be able to assemble such an armoured striking force. The initiative now lay with the Russians.

Eastern Front

December 1943

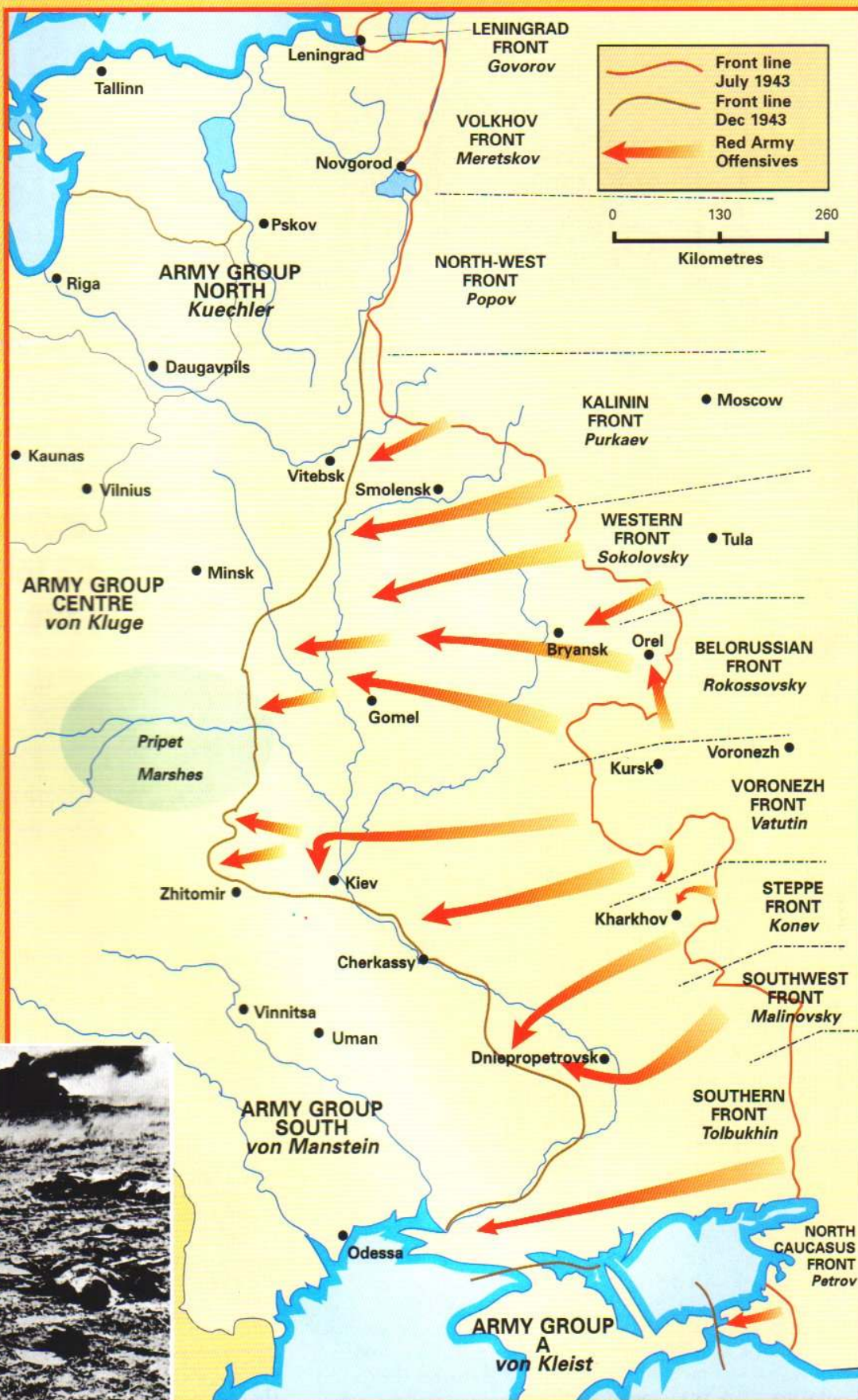
AFTER KURSK had stripped them of so much equipment and so many men, the Germans were faced with a new and disturbing situation: the Soviets, who had suffered similar losses, had no apparent difficulty in replacing them immediately. Only a few days after the Citadel operation was called off, the Soviets took the offensive, taking Orel and finally relieving Kharkhov by the end of July.

NON-STOP OFFENSIVES

The offensives continued, one beginning as its predecessor slowed, giving the Wehrmacht no time to regroup. Rokossovsky and Vatutin smashed forwards towards Kiev, while the Kalinin Front aimed to retake Smolensk. In the south Malinovsky aimed for the Dnieper alongside Konev, and Tolbukhin's Southern Front threatened to cut off Kleist's forces on the Kerch peninsula and in Crimea.

By mid-September, every Soviet front from Smolensk southwards was on the move. To the hard-pressed Germans, fresh tanks and men seemed to be appearing out of a limitless well. After a pause for the autumn mud, the offensives continued over the frozen ground. By the beginning of November armies were grinding their way across the river, and 2,000 guns were pounding the Germans around Kiev. The only pause came at the end of the year, when the Red Army paused to consolidate. But nobody on the German side was in any doubt: the New Year would see the Red Army steamroller on the move again.

Below: The catastrophic German losses at Kursk decisively shifted the balance of power in the East: the Wehrmacht no longer had the capability to hold back the resurgent Red Army



HITLER'S WAR MACHINE



SPECIAL FORCES

When Spanish Nationalist forces were poised to attack Madrid in 1936, their commander General Mola said he had four columns outside the city – and a fifth already inside. From the moment Hitler went to war three years later, his opponents were on the lookout for a Nazi ‘Fifth Column.’

Brandenburgers fought in most theatres of war, performing missions ranging from sabotage by night to full-scale seaborne assaults. In North Africa their primary function was long-range reconnaissance, on some occasions far behind British lines, and on others far out into the desert.



JOSEPH GOEBBELS' radio broadcasts added to the fear of fifth columnists. He called on *Volksdeutsch* – ethnic Germans – all over Europe to rally to Hitler.

Some helped the Germans during the invasion of Poland. The fall of Norway in 1940 was assisted by Nazi sympathisers led by Vidkun Quisling; he gave his name to those who collaborated in occupied Europe.

The blitz across France and the Low countries inspired widespread arrests of suspected fifth columnists. Military authorities knew that the strategically vital bridge over the river Maas at Gennep had been captured by some sort of special forces unit in advance of the main invasion force. A spy scare gripped Britain; immigrants and refugees were regarded with deep suspicion. The hunt was on for Nazi parachutists.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

The paratroops who seized the bridge at Gennep had also captured the Belt bridge during the invasion of Denmark. They were not part of the Luftwaffe's elite *Fallschirmjäger* division



that parachuted into Holland, but a special unit reporting directly to OKW. Officially known as *Baulehrbataillon zbV 800* (construction training/special duties battalion 800) they were christened 'Brandenburgers' after the state in which they were formed in 1939. The unit was subordinated to Admiral Canaris and the *Abwehr*. Recruited in company strength and expanded to a battalion in 1940, it included a high proportion of *Volksdeutsch* proficient in foreign languages. Allied special forces, such as the British SAS, would be created during the war for operations behind the lines, but the Brandenburgers were in action from the first day of Hitler's War.

'TRAINING' REGIMENT

By the end of 1940 the Brandenburgers were re-designated *Lehr Regiment Brandenburg zbV 800* and expanded to include a parachute battalion and a battalion of marines. They were tasked with the capture of strategically vital points during the invasion of the Balkans. Detachments secured the bridge over the river Vardar in Yugoslavia while others guarded the Romanian oil wells at Ploesti, feared by OKW to be a target of Allied saboteurs. Brandenburgers spearheaded the assault on Russia in 1941, capturing the bridge over the Dvina at Daugavpils in Latvia and seizing

Above: Brandenburgers spearheaded the German attack on the Low Countries in May 1940. Their primary task was to take several bridges ahead of the advancing Wehrmacht, using Dutch greatcoats and helmets to deceive the defending forces until the moment of attack.

Below: Partisans in Serbia – or Brandenburgers in disguise? The Abwehr's special operations unit specialised in covert operations in enemy uniform – an extremely dangerous mission, since capture almost invariably meant execution as spies.



the city of Lvov.

The Latvian mission was nearly a 'bridge too far'. A company of Brandenburgers had parachuted behind the lines, dressed in Red Army uniforms. Speaking fluent Russian, they pretended to march across the bridge, then shot down the sentries and seized control of both banks. However, the German armoured column that was supposed to link up with them took longer than expected, and the Russians counter-attacked the bridge. The Brandenburgers fought savagely to hold their ground until the tanks arrived. Ironically, one of

their number, taken prisoner by German forces unaware of his identity, was photographed: his image, captioned 'Typical Bolshevik subhuman' was published in *Signal* magazine to the amusement of his comrades.

The Brandenburgers expanded to a division during 1942, although its units were scattered across all fronts, including North Africa, and seldom fought in greater than company strength. It trained for assaults on Soviet factories in the Urals or raids on the Caucasus oil fields, but served primarily as an intelligence gathering service. Small patrols, often including





Above: Special Units 287 and 288 were formed from the 11th Brandenburg Company. They began operations in North Africa in 1941, even though Erwin Rommel did not approve of 'special forces'. Among their planned operations was one to foment a nationalist rebellion in Cairo, and another was to seize bridgeheads over the Suez Canal.

Below: The Jablunka Pass Detachment was the first 'Brandenburger' unit to see action, on 26 August 1939. Commanded by Oberleutnant Albrecht Herzner, a force of 70 disguised Polish-speaking soldiers seized a key railroad junction in the Tatra mountains. However, radio-silence for security reasons meant that they did not find out the invasion of Poland had been delayed for four days, and when they did make contact they were ordered to slip back over the border.



Below: Hauptmann von Hippel of the Abwehr's Department II first proposed a special operations commando unit before the war. The first wartime operations were carried out by temporary units, but by November 1939 the first company was in training at Brandenburg, and by December von Hippel was in command of a battalion.



'turned' Russian soldiers, infiltrated behind Soviet lines to report on the location, strength and activities of Soviet forces. The risk of capture was high and these men faced a grisly fate in enemy hands. Their reports enabled OKW to enjoy excellent knowledge of the Soviet order of battle. From 1942 units from the Brandenburg division were also employed on anti-partisan duties.

SPYING ON PARTISANS

Russian-speaking soldiers would join Red Army partisan units in order to betray their operations. As the guerrilla groups were assembled from a wide variety of army units cut off by the German advance in 1941, it was possible to create a multitude of cover stories, but the risks and consequences of capture were terrible indeed.

The last and potentially greatest Brandenburger mission ended in obscure failure in November 1943. The *Abwehr* knew that Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt were to meet at Tehran at the end of the month. Aided by agents from the *Volksdeutsch* community in northern Iran and by spies inside the Persian capital, they concocted Operation Long Jump: a plan to kill or capture 'the Big Three'. An assault team would parachute in near the city and be conducted to the conference area by the *Abwehr* team already in position. Unfortunately for the Brandenburgers, the operation was betrayed to the NKVD. Soviet agents captured some of the men in Tehran and the commandos were killed when their unmarked Junkers Ju-52 was bounced by Soviet fighters as it flew across the Turkish border.

The implication of the *Abwehr* in the resistance against Hitler led to its take-over by the SS in February 1944. The Brandenburg division was redesignated as a *panzergrenadier* division, to be employed as conventional mechanised infantry. Some men were transferred to the SS to join *Obersturmbannführer*

(Lieutenant-Colonel) Otto Skorzeny's commando teams, the Friedenthal *Jagdverbände* (Friedenthal hunting groups).

Skorzeny was an Austrian volunteer who joined 1st SS division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* and served in its artillery regiment from 1940 until he was invalided out of Russia in December 1942. He returned to Vienna with the Iron Cross First Class and a fitness report that restricted him to home duties. Nevertheless, he transferred to 3rd SS division *Totenkopf* in early 1943, but suffered a relapse. A giant of a man with a prominent duelling scar, Skorzeny had attracted the attention of his superiors for his ruthlessness and bravery.

SS SPECIAL FORCES

When Himmler decided to follow the example of the SAS and create a special forces unit in the SS, he selected the fanatical *Obersturmführer* (Lieutenant) unaware how rapidly his services would be required. The unit was established on Hitler's birthday 1943 and began training at Friedenthal.

One British operation that particularly inspired Skorzeny was the attempt to kill General Rommel at his headquarters during the Desert War. Although the Desert Fox was not there at the time, the appearance of British commandos deep behind German lines had become a regular feature of the campaign in North Africa.

MUSSOLINI RESCUE

On 23 July 1943 Mussolini was overthrown by his army high command and arrested. In spite of numerous security measures taken by his captors, the Germans tracked him down. Skorzeny was ordered to the rescue, and in a daring raid freed the former dictator.

Hitler was jubilant. Goebbels milked the incident for all it was worth. Skorzeny was promoted and his unit enlarged. Feted in Berlin, he prepared several special operations that were



THE FÜHRER'S DAREDEVIL

OTTO SKORZENY'S MOST FAMOUS MISSION was the rescue of the deposed Italian leader Benito Mussolini. Hitler knew Italy was poised to change sides, and ordered the rescue of his fellow dictator so that the Fascist regime could be resurrected.

Skorzeny was summoned to Hitler, who took an immediate liking to this super-confident fellow Austrian. The Führer's judgement was not misplaced. Skorzeny flew to Italy where he travelled the country in a variety of disguises, depending on his own resources rather than German army intelligence. He tracked Mussolini to the Hotel Imperatore, a resort high in the Abruzzi mountains. It was thought to be impregnable to assault by anything less than a division.

On 9 September, as Allied forces landed in southern Italy, Skorzeny attacked the hotel by glider, leading 90 men drawn from his own command and from 7. Fallschirmjäger division. The daring assault took the Italians completely by surprise. Having secured the building and rescued Mussolini, the plan called for the fallen dictator to be driven to Aquila, where the airfield had been seized by a German parachute battalion. However, Skorzeny could not make contact with the Luftwaffe to coordinate the move, so was forced to resort to his back-up plan. A Fieseler Fi 156 Storch spotter plane put down on the tiny field by the hotel, and whisked Mussolini to freedom.



Above: Skorzeny looms over the figure of Mussolini as they prepare to take off in Fieseler Storch. Il Duce was flown to Rome, where he transferred to a Heinkel for the journey to Hitler's headquarters in Prussia. Skorzeny was awarded the Knight's Cross for the successful rescue mission.

Top right: The large Austrian commando was one of the most colourful figures to emerge from the Third Reich. His scarred face came from the tenth of 15 ritual sabre duels he fought as a student in Vienna. A Nazi party member from 1930, he was heavily involved in preparations for the Anschluss, and became something of a protégé of Kaltenbrunner.

Right: Few of Skorzeny's planned missions ever took place. Usually daring, even foolhardy in conception, they faced both political and military opposition from more conventionally-minded superiors. One of the most ambitious was to have been launched in November 1943, when the three main Allied leaders were in conference in Teheran. Skorzeny intended to raid the conference, decapitating the anti-German alliance at one stroke.





Above: Operation Axis was the plan to seize Italian-held positions once the Badoglio government announced for the Allies. The 1st Company of the Brandenburg coastal raider battalion was based in Piraeus, and went into action in the Athens/Larissa area on 9 September.



Above: In one of the last major German successes of the Mediterranean campaign, the Brandenburgers spearheaded the German counter-attack to retake the Aegean islands of Kos and Leros, which had been captured by the British in September 1943.

overtaken by events and cancelled, including the abduction of Marshal Pétain and the assassination of Tito. In the capital on 20 July, he coordinated loyal Nazi units against the coup attempt that followed the bomb attack on Hitler's headquarters.

HORTHY MISSION

Skorzeny's next mission was to keep Hungary in the war. The Hungarian regent, Admiral Horthy was known to be negotiating with Stalin; the Red Army had seized passes over the Carpathian mountains and was poised to invade the Magyar heartland. If Hungary defected, Germany itself would be exposed to invasion. In an exemplary display of bluff and daring, Skorzeny succeeded in kidnapping Horthy's son in the middle of Budapest and drove a motorised column right into the palace. The Regent was removed and replaced by a puppet regime drawn from the Hungarian Fascist movement. Hungary remained a German ally until the end of the war.

On 16 December 1944 the German army launched its last great offensive of the war: Hitler's insanely ambitious attempt to repeat the triumph of 1940 by

attacking through the Ardennes forest. The plan called for a rapid breakthrough to the river Meuse, thence to Antwerp, cutting off the vanguard of the Allied armies.

Skorzeny was ordered to take the Meuse crossings before Allied engineers could blow the bridges. Leading a column dressed in American uniforms and driving captured US tanks and trucks, he was to bluff his way as far as possible and then fight once his unit's cover was blown. OKW issued a request for English-speaking volunteers.

'SPIES' CONTROVERSY

The decision to fight in enemy uniform was controversial. Under the internationally accepted rules of war, this meant execution if captured. It had never been an issue in Russia where both sides habitually executed PoWs, but would prevent a 'civilised' surrender in the style still possible with the British and Americans.

Skorzeny's 150th Panzer Brigade was compromised from the start. Only one of the promised M4 Shermans turned up in running order, and Skorzeny's men had to mock up several Panther tanks to look like Shermans. His adjutant spoke for them all when he observed that

these might just fool a GI – in the dark and at long range. Skorzeny was not happy: he had to be talked out of aborting the mission.

Ahead of his mechanised brigade, a number of four-man teams drove into the Allied lines in jeeps. Selected from his best English speakers, their attempts to impersonate GIs were not uniformly successful: one group stopped for gas and said 'petrol, please'. Neither word was in the vocabulary of a GI in a hurry and the Germans fled when their identity was challenged. They crashed and were arrested.

Three refused to speak even when threatened with a death sentence. As a result, they were executed by firing squad. Any qualms the US authorities might have had were soon removed by news of the massacre of American prisoners by SS men at Malmedy. One man broke and confessed all.

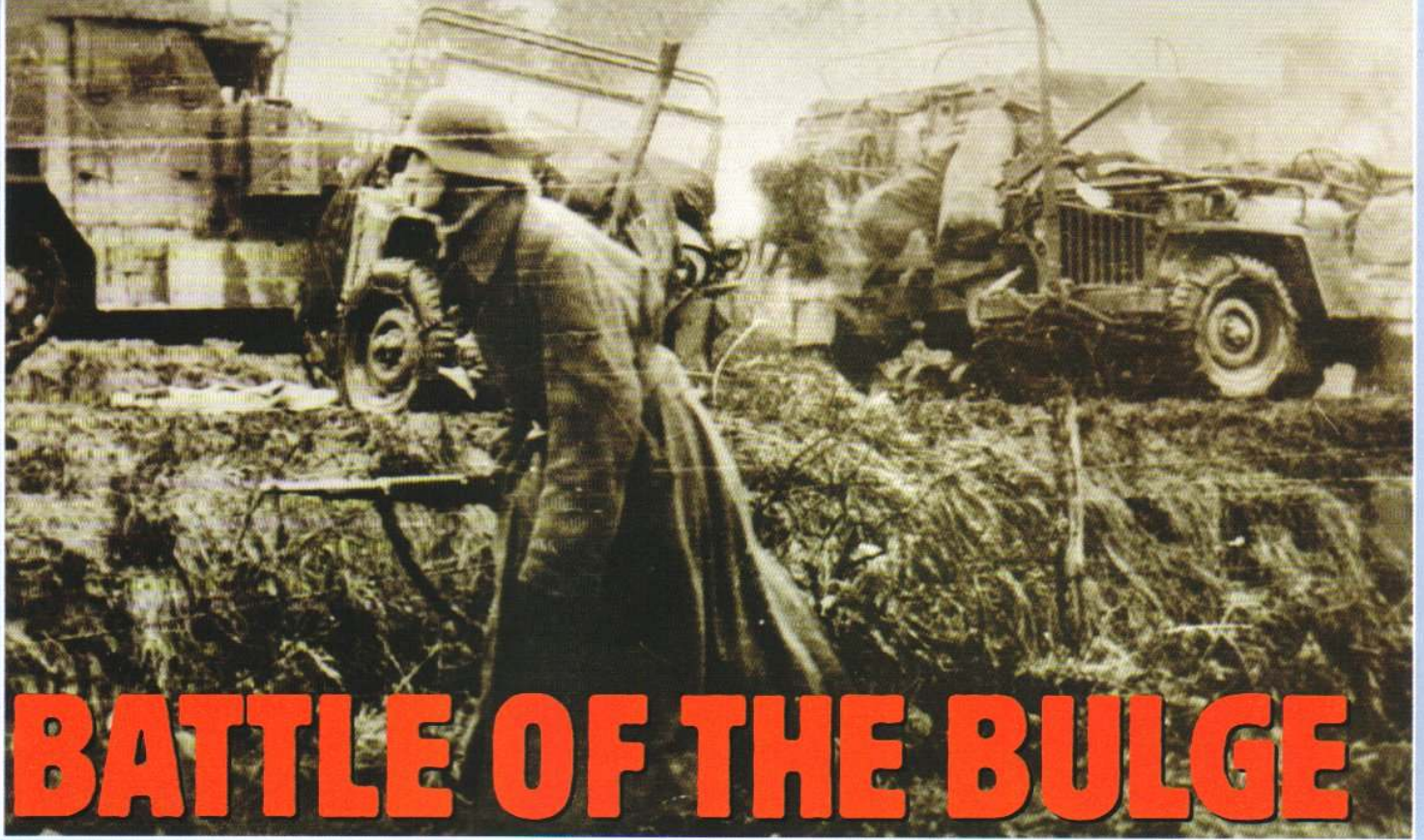
RUMOURS AND PANIC

The news started a new panic. Rumours multiplied, but the assumption was that Skorzeny was leading a band of cut-throats in Allied uniforms, their objective: the assassination of General Eisenhower. Anyone trying to pass through a US Army checkpoint

had to undergo a ludicrous process of question and answer. Many a British officer failed to know the difference between a linebacker and a wide receiver or know who Betty Grable had married. They found themselves under arrest. Eisenhower became a virtual prisoner in his own headquarters, his every movement covered by jittery MPs.

The rumours proved far more effective than 150th Panzer Brigade itself, which was stuck in traffic behind the German lines. The Meuse crossings remained tantalisingly out of reach. There was no prospect of seizing them by *coup de main*. On 21 December, Skorzeny's men were committed as part of an attack on the US 30th Division near Malmedy; they discarded their US uniforms and fought as conventional troops. Skorzeny was wounded and on the 28th the unit was withdrawn.

The story of Hitler's special forces thus began and ended with a panic hunt for Fifth Columnists. Skorzeny was tried for war crimes at Nuremberg and acquitted. His involvement in the escape of some SS officers to South America has never been proved. He lived in Spain until his death in 1975.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE WINTER OFFENSIVE through the Ardennes at the end of 1944 was Germany's last throw of the dice. Hitler's generals amassed the largest and most powerful strike force since the great eastern front battles of 1943. Equipped with the latest weapons, three entire armies – including Sepp Dietrich's 6th SS Panzer Army and Hasso von Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army – smashed into a weak point in the American front line. The German spearheads were directed at the port of Antwerp, their aim to divide the Allied forces.

The attack, shocking though it was to the Allies, could never have succeeded. The British, Americans and Canadians simply had too many men, too much equipment and a vast superiority in the air. After initial successes, the Germans quickly bogged down in the face of stiffening American resistance – resistance that was only strengthened by reports of the massacre of American prisoners at Malmedy. It was into this maelstrom that Skorzeny's special group of English-speaking, American-dressed volunteers was thrown. Skorzeny's men knew that if they fell into American hands, they risked being shot. Nevertheless, they went ahead with the operation.

Above: The German plan was to reach the Meuse on day one of the attack. One of the tasks allotted to Skorzeny's raiders was to seize key bridges over the river: however, the advance teams in Jeeps were rumbled before they could take their objectives, and the armoured force in American tanks which was supposed to support them was caught in traffic. Even if they had been successful and managed to take the river crossings, it would have been to no avail: unexpectedly fierce American resistance slowed the main German attack, already crippled by lack of fuel. Instead of being on the river by the end of day one, the leading Panzers were still 30 kilometres short of their objective on the 20th of December, four days after the offensive began.

Below and below left: Skorzeny survived the mission – wounded in action, he got back to the German lines and was hospitalised. Many of his men were less fortunate, and a number were captured wearing American uniforms. The members of one group refused to talk to the court martial which tried them, and were sentenced to be shot as spies. As a last request, Fahnrich Guenther Billing (below left), Feldwebel Manfred Pernass and Obergefreiter Schmidt asked for Christmas carols to be sung to them by captured German nurses.





INFANTRY EQUIPMENT



AN INFANTRY soldier spends most of his time on his feet. He cannot rely on supply trains or baggage wagons, so he must carry everything he needs for combat and basic survival on his person. From Roman times, the foot soldier has marched with heavy loads, and a large part of any field uniform is designed to enable him to sling those loads in the most comfortable – or perhaps more accurately the least uncomfortable – fashion.

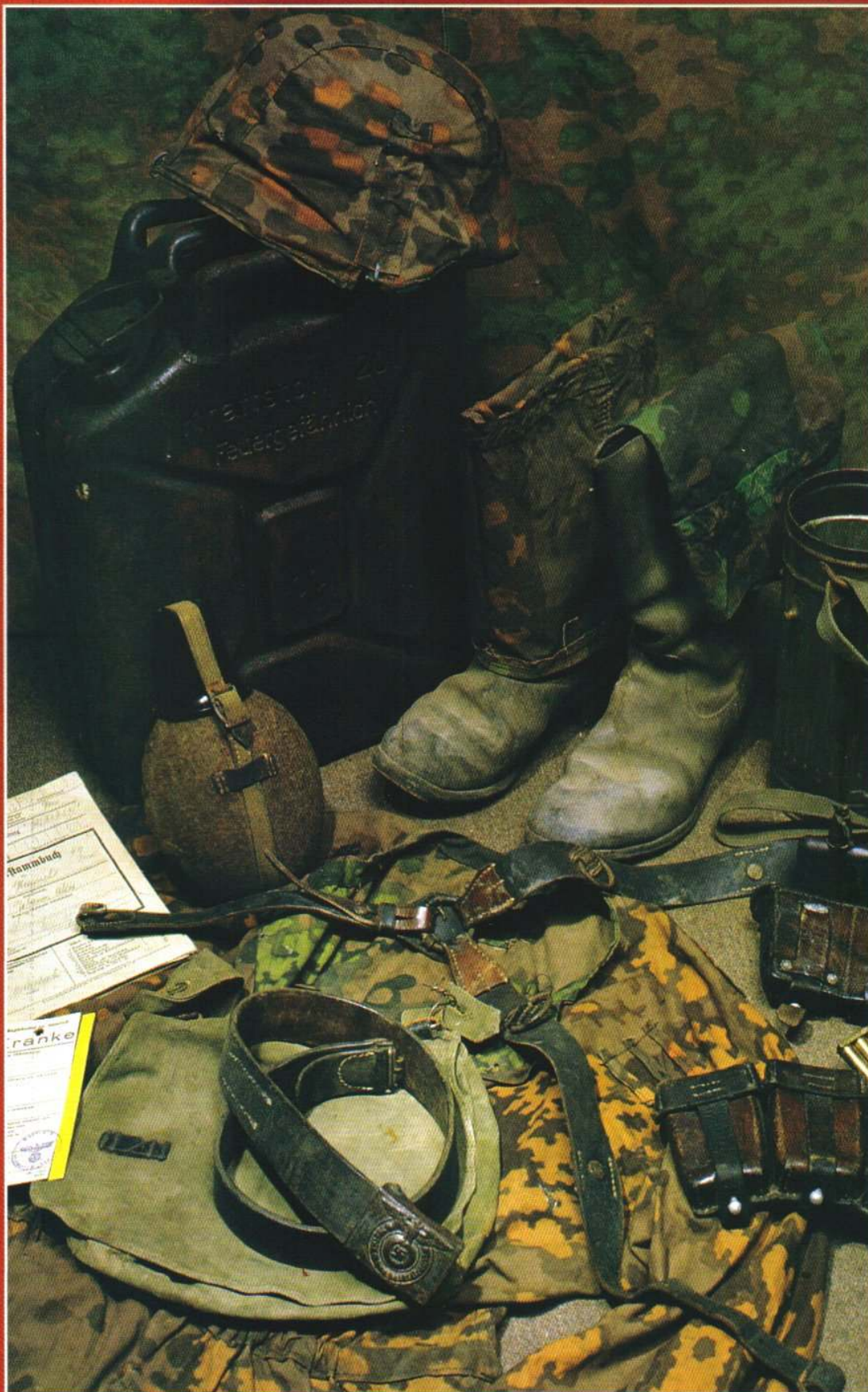
MAJOR LOAD

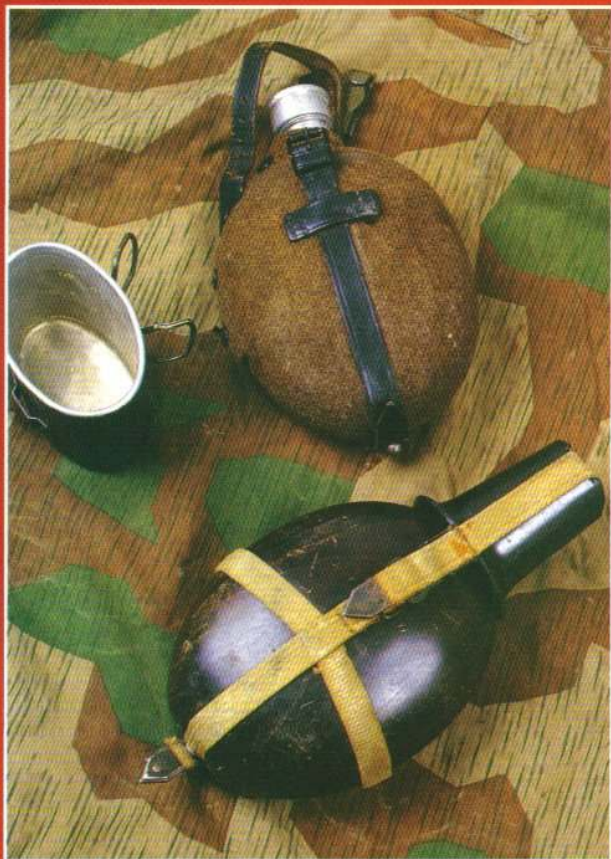
First, he must have his fighting gear: his rifle, ammunition, a bayonet or knife, an entrenching tool, grenades and perhaps a gas mask. To fight with those weapons he needs to be fit, so the second priority is water, rations and first-aid supplies. On top of that he must also carry equipment relevant to his role – radios for communications specialists, extra ammunition for machine gun crews, tools for engineers. And because he has to be able to fight in all weathers, he needs blankets, greatcoats and poncho/tent sections.

In the German army all this was secured by a complex harness of leather – tough and strong, capable of being buffed to a brilliant shine for parades, but not ideal for some climactic conditions. It was not until late in the war that more modern webbing material found its way to the front line.

Left: A much decorated Unteroffizier of the infantry poses with friends after having been awarded the Knight's Cross. He is clothed and equipped in early war style, and on his leather belt and combat straps he is carrying a pistol, binoculars, a map case and a compass.

Right: A near complete set of German infantry equipment, left behind in a barn when a wounded SS man was evacuated from Normandy in 1944. An Army infantryman would have carried virtually identical gear, with the exception of the SS camouflage clothing.





Above left: The German Army's standard 80-cl M31 Feldflasche – Field Flask or water bottle – was made from aluminium, with a felt covering for insulation. It came with a cup which was usually painted black, and which was carried strapped over the screw cap. The Afrika Korps version, for use under the fierce desert sun, was made of plastic-impregnated wood, with a bakelite cup.

Above: The S84/98 bayonet was used on the German Army's Gewehr 98 rifles. Turning a rifle into a spear is normally of little practical use, but the bayonet was a fearsome close-quarters weapon in the bitter fighting on the Eastern Front. The metal scabbard was hung from a leather frog, which had a hilt-retaining strap added during the war. The frog looped through the field belt – this is an SS example – and the bayonet was worn on the left hip.

Left: The classic German jackboot began to be replaced early in the war by conventional lace-up boots, which used less leather in their construction. These high-quality brown leather mountain boots were issued to Gebirgsjäger, who needed the heavy studs and cleats for grip in snow and ice. The experimental canvas 'Styrian' gaiters were issued for trials with the SS-Gebirgs-Division Nord.

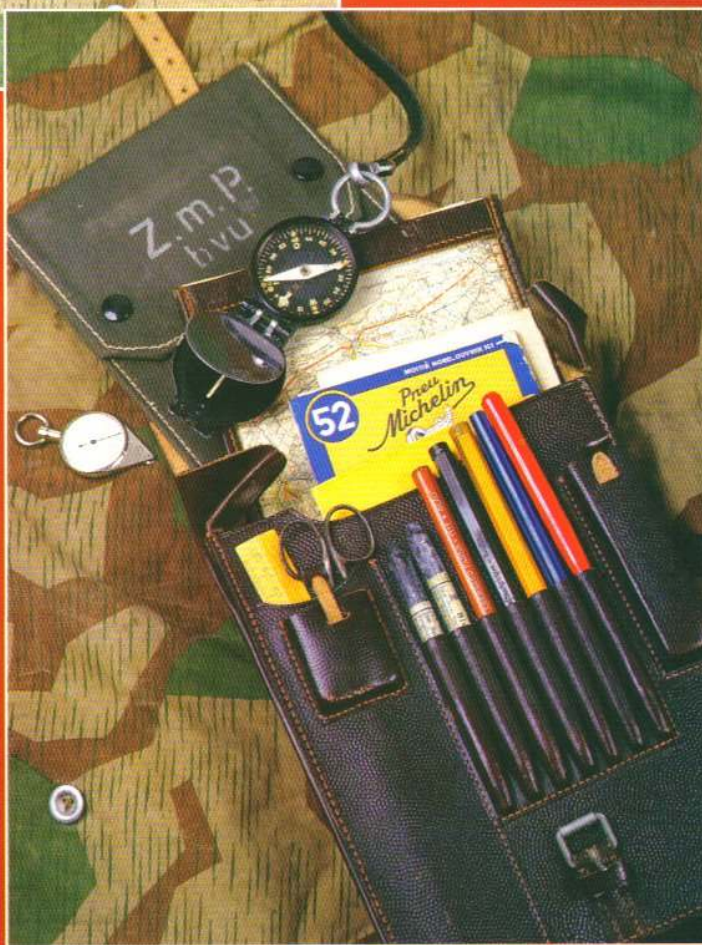


Left: The Tornister or pack was made from canvas, though the flap was covered in horse- or cow-hide. The original M34 pattern had integral straps, but the M39 version seen here attached direct to the combat 'Y' straps or braces. It was usually kept with the baggage train in combat. Until the outbreak of war the M35 helmet was polished, but wartime examples were issued in a matt finish in various shades of grey. In the field soldiers would often roughen the finish further.

Below left: A pair of Model 1911 black grained leather ammunition pouches for the K98 Mauser rifle. These examples were issued to the SS, as they carry SS/RZM stamps and serial numbers.

Below: The M35 map case used by most of the German armed forces. This example in brown leather was carried by a Luftwaffe signals officer. It had three main compartments for holding maps and charts, notebooks, and scale rulers and protractors. Pencils, pens and writing equipment had their own holders on the front flap. Compasses were often carried on a lanyard.

FIELD GEAR



A Z

OF THE THIRD REICH

Piscator, Erwin (1893 - 1966)

Theatre manager, director and prominent refugee from the Third Reich, Erwin Piscator was born in Ulm, Wetzlar District on 17 December 1893. Called up for military service in 1915, Piscator was assigned to a 'Front Theatre' at Kortrijk, Belgium, where he worked as an actor and director on troop entertainments.

Piscator's war experiences heightened his existing pacifist and Communist views, and in 1920 established the Proletarian

Theatre in Berlin, which played in the working class areas of the city. In association with Berlin's Dadaists, he introduced revolutionary techniques like film projectors and loudspeakers on stage. In 1929, he published a polemic on 'The Political Theatre.'

As early as 1931 Piscator could see the direction in which German politics was heading, and he moved to Moscow, where he worked with the International Revolutionary Theatre League.

He was in Paris from 1936 to 1939, and then moved to New York. In the 1950s he worked in Switzerland, Italy, Sweden and Germany, and from 1962 until his death headed the Free People's Theatre in Berlin.

Right: Less well-known today than contemporaries like Berthold Brecht, Erwin Piscator was nevertheless an important pioneer in the development of modern political theatre.



Pius XI (1857 - 1939)

Born Achille Ratti in Desio, Milan, the man who would become Pope Pius XI was ordained in 1879. After a brilliant career as scholar and theologian, he was elected Pope in 1922.

Assisted by his Secretary of State, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius concluded Vatican concordats and treaties with Bavaria in 1924, Prussia in 1929, Baden in 1932, the Third Reich in 1933 and Austria in 1934.

Any agreements with the Nazis did not last: on 14 March 1937, he issued a heart-felt encyclical on the condition of the church in Germany. Entitled *Mit brennender Sorge* - With Deep Anxiety - it protested the violations of natural law and justice. In the same week he issued *Divini redemptoris*, a letter that condemned atheistic Communism.

Earlier, in 1929, he concluded the Lateran Treaties which

established a modus vivendi with Mussolini, but two years later he issued a letter *Non abbiamo bisogno* that protested against the pagan worship of the state by Italian Fascists. He died in Rome on 10 February 1939.

Right: Pope Pius XI recognised the necessity of coming to an agreement with fascism, both in Italy and Germany. Even so, he criticised the godless nature of the governments in Rome and Berlin.



Pius XII (1876 - 1958)

One of the most controversial Popes of the 20th Century, Eugenio Pacelli was born in Rome. Ordained in 1899, he spent most of his career as a papal diplomat, and worked closely with Pius XI in the 'concordat' policy of the 1930s. He was elected Pope in 1939.

Pius XII made vain efforts to prevent World War II by mediation, and tried to help the persecuted and suffering, to little effect. However, the furore around the name of Pius XII centres on the Holocaust.

On 30 April 1943 he sent the Archbishop of Berlin a letter. He wrote: "it is superfluous to say that Our paternal love and

solicitude are greater today toward non-Aryan or semi-Aryan Catholics, children of the church like the others, when their outward existence is collapsing and they are going through moral distress. Unhappily, in present circumstances, We cannot offer them effective help other than our prayers".

This rather oblique reference was one of the few that the Pope made about the Final Solution, and critics have said that his hatred of Communism and fear of its spread blinded him to the evils of Nazism. In June 1943 he told the College of Cardinals that public condemnation of Jewish genocide might do more harm

than good. That year the Nazis rounded up 8,000 Jews in Rome. The victims, 1,000 of whom were women and children, went straight to the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

Pope Pius XII died at Castel Gandolfo on 9 October 1958.

Right: As Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli negotiated the Concordat with the Nazis in Berlin. As Pope Pius XII, his reputation has been shadowed by the the Holocaust, and whether he did enough to oppose the Genocide.



**See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 28: Hitler and the Church**

Planck, Erwin (1893 - 1945)

Civil servant and member of the Resistance, Planck was born in Berlin on 12 March 1893, son of the internationally known physicist Max Planck. Wounded and captured in World War I he was exchanged by the French.

After the war he was Under-secretary to the Reich Chancellery but resigned when Hitler came to power. He turned to private study of economics, political science and history - and to membership of the active opposition to Hitler.

Arrested on 23 July 1944 after the July Plot he appeared before the *Volksgesicht* and was condemned to death. He was executed at Plötzensee on 23 January 1945.

His father, one of the

originators of quantum physics, was one of the few scientists of reputation to remain in Germany under the Reich. He was not a Nazi, however, speaking up for Jewish colleagues and lecturing on the work of Albert Einstein.

Plötzensee

A prison in the Charlottenburg district of north west Berlin. A large brick building within the sprawling complex was one of the main judicial execution centres for the German capital.

Nearly 3,000 people were executed there during the years of the Third Reich, most by hanging or guillotine. Some were criminals convicted of capital crimes, but the majority were

opponents of the Nazi regime.

Plötzensee was at its busiest in the last winter of the war, when the conspirators of the 20 July Plot were killed. They included in their number von Hassell, Planck,

Popitz, von Moltke and Leber. Most were hanged, slowly, using piano wire, though on Hitler's instructions Carl Goerdeler, the former Mayor of Leipzig, had his head hacked off by a small axe.

Pohl, Oswald (1892 - 1951)

SS-Obergruppenführer whose position in charge of the SS business programme saw him rise to become one of the most powerful men in the SS state.

Born in Duisburg on 30 June 1892, he was a Naval purser at the end of World War I. By 1934 he was a senior paymaster in the Navy, but resigned to become the chief administrative officer at SS headquarters. He had joined the Nazi Party in 1926, and became a member of the SS in 1929.

He administered both the armed SS units and the concentration camps, taking charge of works projects for camp inmates.

Given a senior post in the

Interior Ministry in 1939, Pohl ran the SS Economic Enterprises, expanding rapidly with the outbreak of war.

From 1942 to 1945, Pohl headed the *Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* – WVHA or Main Economic and Administrative Office – of the SS. He used the vast resource of the camp system to provide cheap labour for the war industries – over half a million inmates were available in 1944, rising to nearly 800,000 early in 1945.

Pohl favoured slightly more humane conditions for slave labourers than Himmler, who was a firm believer of working slaves to death: Pohl knew that if you

treated them a little better the slaves would be more productive.

After the war Pohl went into hiding but was arrested in May 1946 working as a farm hand. He was tried in November 1947 by a US military tribunal, found guilty and sentenced to death. He was hanged at Landsberg Prison on 8 June 1951.

Right: An impassive Oswald Pohl listens as he is sentenced to death for war crimes. As head of all SS economic enterprises, Pohl controlled a massive industrial machine – which worked tens of thousands of slaves to death.

See also Nazi Horrors

Issue 2: Slave Labour



'Polnische Wirtschaft'

'Polish Business' was the metaphor used by Nazi leaders before and after their rise to power to describe the loss of territory in Prussia after 1918. These were called the "bleeding frontiers of the east." The existence of an independent Poland was also seen as a block for *Lebensraum* – living space in the east. The Nazis used 'Polish Business' or 'Polish Mess' as a shorthand term to describe the lot of German-speakers living under Polish rule, the prejudices this aroused forming part of the justification for the invasion of

September 1939.

The term actually dated back to the middle of the 19th Century, when it was used by Germans as a colloquial expression for a general state of confusion and neglect, gradually coming to mean a complete mess. At that time Poland was ruled by Russia, and was reputed to be a particularly poor and chaotic province.

Right: Polish infantrymen parade before Marshal Pilsudski – on territory which was formerly German. The Nazis had many enemies, but some of their most virulent hatred was for the Poles.



Popitz, Johannes (1884 - 1945)

Born in Leipzig, Popitz was a brilliant scholar, jurist and finance minister. After the First World War he secretly advised the Weimar government on economics, becoming a State Secretary in 1925. Popitz, a right-wing conservative, did not much like the socialist government, so at first he welcomed the rise of the Nazis. He was highly respected by Hitler, who appointed him Prussian Minister of Finance in April 1933. In 1937 the Führer awarded Popitz the *Goldenes Parteiabzeichen* – the Golden Party Badge.

Popitz however had a very low opinion of Hitler and moved from contempt through resistance to conspiracy. In 1938 he tried to resign over the treatment of the Jews, but his resignation was refused. It was about this time that he made contact with Beck and Goerdeler and began to play an active part in the resistance.

In 1943, he and Carl Langbehn visited Himmler in an attempt to encourage him to support a coup d'état and negotiate a satisfactory peace. Himmler kept his council, and though Langbehn was later arrested Popitz remained at

liberty until the 1944 July Plot.

Arrested and tried by the *Volksgesicht*, he was condemned to death. Himmler managed to keep him alive for four months, but he was finally hanged at Plötzensee in Berlin on 2 February 1945.

Right: An old-school nationalist conservative, Johannes Popitz was respected by the Nazis – a respect which was not reciprocated.

See also Inside the Third Reich

Issue 20: Opposition to Hitler



Positives Christentum

Although the majority of Germans were believers, National Socialism was fundamentally anti-Christian. The Nazi leadership knew that it could not openly reject the church without alienating the nation.

Proposed by Alfred Rosenberg and adopted as Point 24 of the 1920 Party Programme, *Positives Christentum* – Positive

Christianity – was designed as a transitional stage on the route towards the complete rejection of the Catholic and Protestant churches. Its goal was to purify the German Nordic race, harmonising belief in Christ with “the laws of blood and soil”. Ultimately, it would restore the old pagan Nordic values and substitute the spirit of the hero

for that of Crucifixion. The symbol of Positive Christianity was the orb and sun. After 1933 the *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* – German Faith movement promoted Positive Christianity.

Right: Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi Ideologue seen here on a pre-war visit to London, was responsible for developing the Party line on ‘Aryanising’ Christianity.



Potempa Case

Potempa was a village in Upper Silesia where in August 1932 five SA Stormtroopers kicked a local Communist to death in front of

his mother. They were tried, found guilty and sentenced to death within ten days by a special court in Beuthen.

Hitler protested the sentence, vowing to see the SA men free, and von Papen’s government commuted it to life

imprisonment. In March 1933, after the Nazi assumption of power, the murderers were freed “for the good of the Reich.”

Potsdam Putsch

The unsuccessful attempt by senior military officers to seize power in January 1933, just before Hitler became Chancellor. The Generals were very worried about the prospect of a National Socialist government. Following the dismissal of General Kurt von Schleicher on 28 January, the generals, led by Chief of Staff von Hammerstein intended to declare a state of emergency and impose martial law. However, Schleicher refused to cooperate, saying it

would break his oath of office, and the Generals found little support elsewhere in the army.

Right: General Kurt von Schleicher (near right) was as much a politician as he was a military man. However, he refused to cooperate when fellow generals led by von Hammerstein (far right) threatened to overthrow Hitler’s first government.

**See also Secret Hitler Files
Issue 27: Seizure of Power**



‘Pour le Sémite’

Although life for a Jew in Nazi Germany was horrible, it was not without its moments of black humour. When in 1941 it was made compulsory for all German Jews to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing, it was quickly dubbed *Pour le Sémite*.

This was a play on the words *Pour le Mérite*, the enamelled Prussian medal known as the ‘Blue Max’. Established in 1740 by Frederick II, it was to become

Imperial Germany’s highest decoration for valour.

Right: The wartime wedding of a middle-class French Jewish couple. In spite of the fairly comfortable appearance of the families involved, the wearing of the yellow Star of David indicates that this is 1941 or later, and many of those in the picture will soon be deported to the East.

**See also Hitler’s War Machine
Issue 30: Pzkwf V Panther**



Preussen, August Wilhelm von (1887 - 1949)

Prince August Wilhelm Heinrich Günther von Preussen was a member of the Hohenzollern royal family as well as a member of the Nazi Party. Known to his friends as ‘Auwi’, he was one of the six sons of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

A colonel in World War I, he became a civil servant after the abolition of the monarchy. He joined the *Stahlhelm* in 1927, and in 1929 became a member of the NSDAP and the SA.

Hitler affected friendship, using the membership of a

Hohenzollern prince to attract other monarchists to the party, but once the Führer achieved power in 1933 ‘Auwi’ became less important. In spite of Hitler’s lack of interest, Prince August remained loyal to his leader. He maintained his affiliation with the Party and particularly the SA.

By 1939 he had risen to the rank of *Obergruppenführer* (General). Many of the leaders of the Resistance were monarchists but they did not approach the Prince. They decided that August was

too committed to the Nazis to be an ally against Hitler.

After the war Prince August was not tried as a major war criminal, but he was found guilty of lesser offences. He was sentenced to two and a half years hard labour.

Right: In addition to his prison sentence, the twice-divorced Prince August Wilhelm of Prussia had 40 percent of his property confiscated by the War Crimes Tribunal which he faced at Nuremberg after the war.



Prien, Günther (1909 - 1941)

U-boat ace who became one of the Third Reich's earliest war heroes. On the night of 13-14 October 1939 Prien took the 'Type VII' U-boat *U-47* into the heavily-defended Royal Navy base at Scapa Flow in the Orkneys. Penetrating the minefields and anti-submarine nets via the narrow Kirk Sound, he launched two torpedo attacks at HMS *Royal Oak*. The battleship sank in fifteen minutes and 24 officers and 800 men were killed.

Prien made a skilful surface escape. He was awarded the

Knights Cross – the first to any U-boat commander – and each member of his crew received the Iron Cross (Second Class).

Born in Thuringia, Prien was a merchant seaman before joining the *Kriegsmarine* in 1934. He transferred to U-boats in 1935, and by the outbreak of war was in command of *U-47*. Described by William L. Shirer as "clean-cut, cocky, a fanatical Nazi and obviously capable" he was one of the most successful of all U-boat commanders, sinking over 180,000 tonnes of British shipping

in 18 months. He was awarded Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross in October 1940.

Prien was killed in action on the night of 7/8 March 1941, when *U-47* was sunk by the British destroyer HMS *Wolverine*.

Right: Günther Prien was one of the great U-boat commanders, combining the professionalism of Otto Kretschmer with the flamboyance of Joachim Schepke.



See also Hitler's War Machine
Issue 1: The U-Boats

Prinz Albrechtstrasse

The street in central Berlin on which the Gestapo headquarters was based. In 1933, Hermann Goering moved the anti-Communist office of the Berlin police into a disused arts and crafts school at Number 8 Prinz Albrechtstrasse. As the Prussian Secret Police evolved into the Gestapo, so the building became more important. In time, Prinz Albrechtstrasse became a synonym for the Gestapo in

popular parlance. The Nazis used the address to arouse a sense of fear and dread in their listeners.

Right: Standing exposed by building work in the centre of Berlin the cellars of 8 Prinz Albrecht Strasse don't look like much. But over half a century ago these small rooms echoed to the sound of pain as opponents of the Nazi regime were tortured by the much-feared Gestapo.



KMS Prinz Eugen

Prinz Eugen was an 'Admiral Hipper' class heavy cruiser. She was considered a 'lucky ship' by the men of the *Kriegsmarine* – she was the only major German warship afloat at the end of the war, having survived the Bismarck sortie of May 1941, the Channel Dash of February 1942 and gunfire support for German forces in the Baltic in 1945.

She displaced over 19,000 tons at full load. Powered by high-pressure steam turbines, she had a speed of 33 knots, though the propulsion plant was unreliable

and range was notoriously short.

The 'Hippers' were armed with eight 203-mm guns, twelve 105-mm guns and 12 x 37 mm AA guns. She carried three Arado float planes.

She was surrendered to the Allies in Copenhagen in May 1945 and expended as a US nuclear test target in the Pacific after the war.

Right: Much bigger than at first admitted to by the Germans, the KMS Prinz Eugen was the only 'Hipper' class cruiser to survive the war intact.



Propaganda-Kompanien (PKs)

Film, still photography and print units set up by Dr Paul Joseph Goebbels to cover the operations of the armed forces during World War II. Before the war the Propaganda Ministry had compiled a list of suitable candidates for war correspondents. They attended an eight week course that included war reporting techniques. Though photographs were distributed the Brussels-based SIPO agency, photographers were individually credited.

In the early years of the war the PK men accompanied German

soldiers wherever they went, bringing back outstanding combat footage as they reported on an almost unbroken string of German victories. From 1943 onwards, however, their work was almost exclusively used in morale boosting reports created to cover German defeats.

Right: Propaganda Company members could call on some of the best equipment in the world. This cameraman is using a huge telephoto lens to photograph Dover, less than 35 km distant across the English Channel.



Protocols of the Elders of Zion

A famous forgery purporting to be a plan for world domination by an international Jewish conspiracy. Written by the *Okhrana*, the Tsarist secret police, the Protocols were based on a French anti-masonic pamphlet published in 1864. The Tsarist secret police used the Protocols to justify the government's persecution of the Jews.

The Protocols were said to be a record of the meeting of the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basle, Switzerland. The delegates, they

claimed, planned to blow up major buildings in the capitals of Europe, destroy the Aryan race and set up a Jewish world state. After World War I the Protocols were translated and published in every European language as well as Japanese, Chinese and Arabic.

In 1921 the *London Times* proved the Protocols were a fraud, and in 1935 a Swiss court described the document as a forgery. Nevertheless, for the Nazis the *Protokolle der Weisen von Zion* were accepted as fact.

They were quoted by Hitler, and Alfred Rosenberg wrote several pamphlets on the Jewish conspiracy, based largely on the Protocols. Once the Nazis were in power they were recommended reading in German schools. Ultimately, it was the Protocols which provided a justification for Nazi anti-Semitic actions.

Right: The forged 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' inspired the crudest of caricatures in such anti-semitic publications as Julius Streicher's near pornographic *Der Stürmer*.



Provisional Government

Had Hitler been killed by the July Bomb, the conspirators would have set up a Provisional Government. Executive power would be held by the Army as a temporary measure, while Hitler's followers were arrested and peace could be sought.

After much discussion, the conspirators agreed that the government should include *Generaloberst* Ludwig Beck, representing the older officers and Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg for the younger officers. Other potential members included Carl Goerdeler and the

and members of von Moltke's Kreisau Circle. One version of the Provisional Government had 17 ministerial posts allocated to soldiers and civilians.

Right: Doctor Carl Goerdeler, the Mayor of Leipzig and a highly experienced politician, would have been one of the most important members of any government which would have replaced Hitler had the Bomb Plot conspirators succeeded in killing the Führer.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 20: Opposition to Hitler



Putsch

German word for the attempted take-over of a government by force. There were numerous revolts in the years after the end of World War I, starting with the Kiel naval mutiny of 1918. The revolution in Bavaria and the Spartacist revolt of 1918/1919 were Communist risings. The Silesian rebellion in 1921 involved ethnic Poles.

However, 'Putsch' usually refers only to right-wing actions – specifically the Kapp Putsch, an attempted military coup in Berlin in 1919, and the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch by Hitler. Röhm was

supposed to be planning a Putsch in 1934, which was the pretext for the murder of dissident Nazis on the Night of the Long Knives.

Right: Soldiers and Freikorps members mount up during the attempted Kapp Putsch in 1919. Only part of the army supported the coup: it failed. Four years later, Hitler would try a similar coup with even less success. Eventually, he would realise that the ballot box was the way to seize power.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 12: Nazis and Youth



Quisling, Vidkun (1887 - 1945)

Leader of Norway's fascists, Vidkun Abraham Lauritz Jonsson Quisling's name has become synonymous with collaboration. Born in Fyresdal, Telemarken, he joined the army in 1905 and was commissioned as an artillery officer. He spent long periods abroad as military attache and diplomat, before becoming War Minister in 1931.

He resigned in 1933 to form the Nazi-style *Nasjonal Samling* or

National Unity party. Following the German invasion in 1940 he declared himself Prime Minister. His regime had no support, and was replaced by a German administration. In February 1942 he was made Minister President by the Reich Commissioner for Norway, Josef Terboven.

Quisling tried unsuccessfully to convert churches and schools to National Socialism. He helped in sending nearly 1,000 Jews to the

death camps. After the war he surrendered to the newly restored Norwegian government, was tried and convicted, and was shot in Oslo on 24 October 1945.

Right: Quisling's *Nasjonal Samling* had no popular support, so the burly former officer needed the *Wehrmacht* to declare himself prime minister. Without support he was useless to the Nazis, and he was eventually replaced.



COMING IN THE NEXT VOLUMES OF
HITLER'S
Third Reich

SECRET HITLER FILES

Hitler and war
Hitler and Stalin



THE HOLOCAUST

Jewish emigration
Kovno Ghetto



HITLER'S HENCHMEN

Erhard Milch
Alfred Rosenberg

**HITLER'S WAR
MACHINE**

Panther
Infantry support
Focke-Wulf 190



INSIDE THE REICH

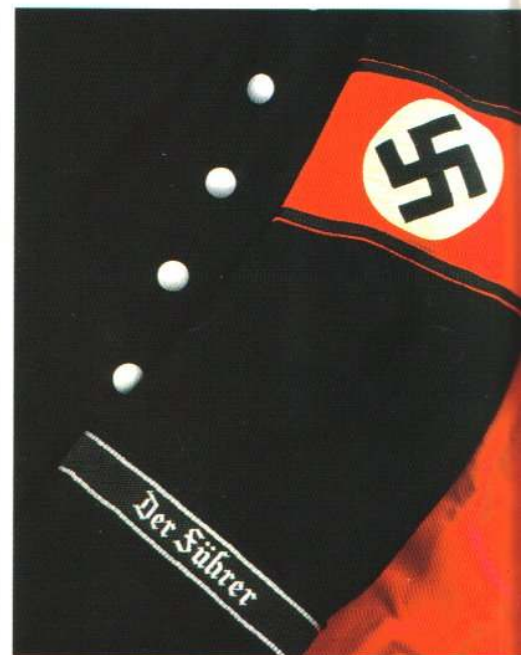
Church and State
German opposition
Berlin Olympics

NAZI HORRORS

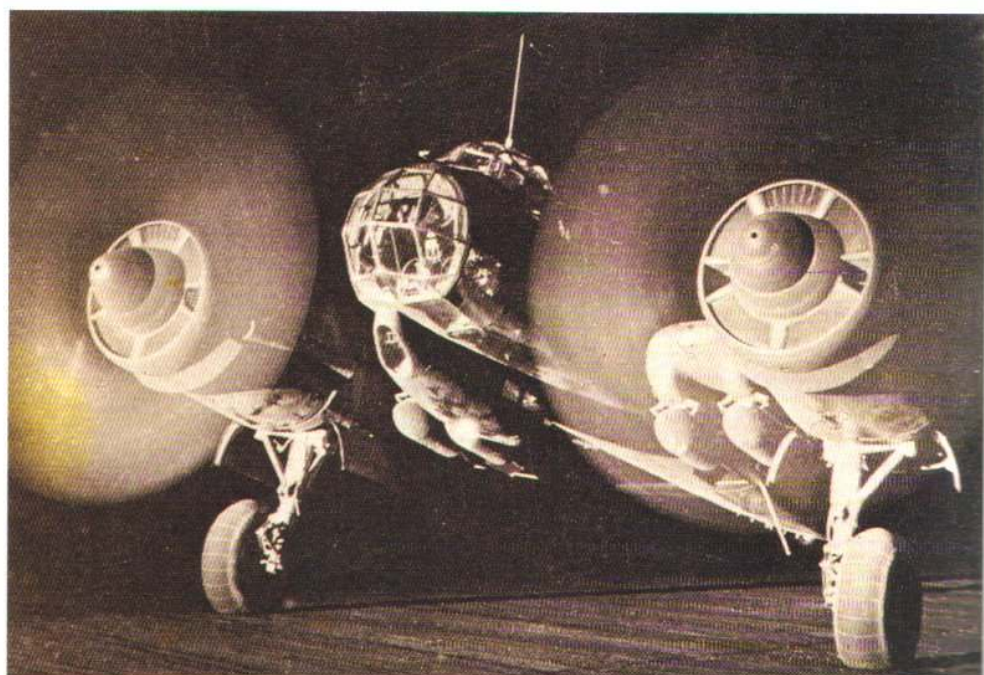
Gross Rosen
Malmedy Massacres
Mauthausen

NAZI SYMBOLS

The Swastika
Afrika Korps



**A-TO-Z OF THE
THIRD REICH**



IN THIS VOLUME OF **HITLER'S** *Third Reich*

SECRET HITLER FILES

To the modern reader, Adolf Hitler's speeches seem long-winded, poorly written, and dull. But in person the Führer was an orator of genius.

INSIDE THE THIRD REICH

Hitler's motorways were the eighth wonder of the modern world. They were great propaganda and a valuable military tool, which also provided jobs.



HITLER'S BATTLES

Stalingrad marked the turn of the tide in the East and the end of Blitzkrieg. Never more would Hitler's Panzers wreak havoc: from now on, the Red Army was the master of the battlefield.



HENCHMEN

The patrician noble Walther von Reichenau secured Hitler's power base by aligning the *Reichswehr* with the Nazis. As a result, he was regarded as a class traitor by his fellow officers, for siding wholeheartedly with the Führer.



HORRORS

The Germans instituted an occupation policy of 'divide and rule.'

Countrymen turned on one another in efforts to gain personal advancement from the nazis.

WAR MACHINE

Much imitated, the German army was first in developing special forces units. They saw action on every front, from the scorched desert to the snows in the Ardennes.

